












**PRACTICE OF PERFECTION  
AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES**



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024

# PRACTICE OF PERFECTION AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES

*By*

ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ

*of the Society of Jesus*

Newly Translated from the Original Spanish

*By*

JOSEPH RICKABY

*of the Same Society*

IN THREE VOLUMES  
VOLUME II

Authorized American Edition

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY PRESS

Chicago, Illinois

1929

248 R  
255 R  
  
Imprimi Potest

HENRICUS KEANE, S. J.

*Praep. Prov. Angliae*

11 Februarii, 1929

Imprimatur

✠ FRANCISCUS

*Episcopus Menevensis*

13 Februarii, 1929

Composed and Plated in the  
United States of America

COPYRIGHT, 1929  
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY PRESS

T-POLP-R-OE



# ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ

*to*

## THE READER\*

Though this work is composed principally for religious, yet it is very useful to all Christians; and this second part, in particular, is so disposed as to be of very great advantage to all secular persons who desire to give themselves entirely to God's service. For their first duty is to subdue their hearts by mortifying their passions, by subjecting their senses (especially their tongue), and by humbling themselves before God, in order that those virtues and good works which they have planted in their souls may spring up and bring forth such fruit as should be expected. It is for this reason that I treat first of mortification, then of modesty and silence, and afterwards of humility; which are the virtues a Christian ought chiefly practise in the beginning of his conversion. And because the Holy Ghost would have those that enter into God's service remain in fear and prepare themselves for temptation, I therefore speak in the Fourth Treatise of the profit and advantage of temptations, and point out the means of overcoming them. In the Fifth and Sixth Treatises I show the obstacles that occur in the paths of virtue, and of how great advantage it is to walk always in these paths with joy and liberty. And, because nothing can better produce this effect than the knowledge of the infinite treasure we possess in Jesus Christ, I make that the subject of the Seventh Treatise; in which I also show how we are to meditate on the mysteries of the Passion and what fruit we are to reap from them. Lastly, I

---

\*Taken from the American edition of 1839.

conclude this second part with a treatise on Holy Communion, in which I show what we are to do in order to prepare ourselves for it and to render it profitable to us; all which I endeavor to treat of as methodically as possible, that the practice may be more easy; which is the chief aim I had in this whole work. If the Christian reader vouchsafes favorably to receive it, I hope, by the assistance of God's grace, that it will help him to subdue his passions, to practise modesty and moderation in all his words and actions, to overcome temptations, to make his profit of the immense treasures with which the Passion of Jesus Christ has enriched the faithful, to receive His body and blood with pious fervor, and to gather and lay up such fruit as may conduce to his everlasting happiness and salvation.

# The Ninth Treatise

## *On Mortification*

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. That We Must Join Mortification to Prayer, and That These Two Things Must Help One Another.....  | 3  |
| 2. In What Mortification Consists, and the Need in Which We Stand of It.....  | 11 |
| 3. That One of the Greatest Chastisements of God Is to Give a Man Over to His Appetites and Desires, Abandoning Him so That He Goes After Them.....     | 16 |
| 4. Of Holy Hatred of Oneself, and the Spirit of Mortification and Penance That Is Born of It.....   | 18 |
| 5. That All Our Spiritual Advancement and Perfection Consists in Mortification.....   | 21 |
| 6. That Mortification Is Especially Necessary for Religious, Particularly for Such as Have to Do with Their Neighbor                                    | 24 |
| 7. Of Two Sorts of Mortification and Penance, and How the Society Embraces and Practises Both.....  | 27 |
| 8. That Mortification Is Not a Hatred, but a True Love, Not of Our Soul Alone, but Even of Our Very Body.....   | 38 |
| 9. That He Who Makes No Effort to Mortify Himself Does Not Only Not Live the Life of a Spiritual, but Not Even of a Rational, Being .....               | 41 |
| 10. That There Is Greater Trouble in Not Practising Mortification Than in Practising It.....  | 44 |
| 11. Here We Begin to Treat of That Practice of Mortification...   | 49 |
| 12. How the Exercise of Mortification Ought to Be Put in Practice .....   | 52 |
| 13. How We Should Mortify Ourselves in Lawful Things, and in Necessary Things, Too.....   | 56 |
| 14. That We Should Chiefly Mortify Ourselves in That Vice or Passion Which Has the Greater Sway over Us and Makes Us Fall into Our Greatest Faults..... | 62 |
| 15. That We Ought Not to Omit Mortifications in Small Things, and How Profitable and Pleasing to God These Mortifications Are.....                      | 64 |
| 16. Of the Harm and Mischief That Comes of Neglecting Mortification in Small Things.....  | 68 |
| 17. Three Important Admonitions Upon This Subject.....  | 71 |
| 18. That It Is Always Necessary to Exercise Ourselves in Mortification, How Good and Advanced Soever We May Be in Virtue .....                          | 77 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 19. Of Two Means That Will Make the Practice of Mortification Easy and Sweet, Which Are the Grace of God and His Holy Love.....          | 81 |
| 20. Of Another Motive That Will Facilitate and Make Agreeable the Practice of Mortification, Namely, the Hope of Reward .....            | 86 |
| 21. What Has Been Said in the Preceding Chapter Is Confirmed by Some Examples.....   | 89 |
| 22. Of Another Motive That Will Help Us, and Render the Practice of Mortification Easy, Which Is the Example of Christ Our Redeemer..... | 93 |
| 23. Of Three Degrees of Mortification.....   | 96 |

## The Tenth Treatise

### *On Modesty and Silence*

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. How Necessary Modesty Is for the Edification and Profit of Our Neighbor.....   | 105 |
| 2. How Necessary Modesty Is for Our Own Advancement.....  | 109 |
| 3. Of the Mistake of Those Who Make Small Account of These Exterior Things, Saying that Perfection Does Not Consist in Them.....    | 112 |
| 4. Of Silence, and the Great Blessings and Advantages There Are in It.....  | 116 |
| 5. That Silence Is a Very Important Means to Be a Man of Prayer .....   | 120 |
| 6. That Silence Is a Direct Means of Spiritual Advancement and the Attainment of Perfection.....                                    | 123 |
| 7. That to Live in Modest Silence and Recollection Is Not a Sad but a Very Cheerful Life.....                                       | 127 |
| 8. Of the Circumstances Necessary for Speaking Well.....  | 128 |
| 9. Of the Vice of Backbiting or Detraction.....   | 137 |
| 10. That We Should Not Lend Our Ears to Detractions.....  | 142 |
| 11. That We Must Beware of All Manner of Lies.....  | 147 |
| 12. That We Should Beware of Jocose and Ridiculous Expressions, and Saying Smart and Witty Things.....                              | 150 |
| 13. That Our Talk and Conversations Ought to Be of God, and of Some Means to Make Them So.....                                      | 154 |
| 14. Of Another Chief Reason Making It Highly Befitting that Our Talks and Conversations with Our Neighbors Should Be about God..... | 158 |



# The Eleventh Treatise

## *On Humility*

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Of the Excellence of the Virtue of Humility, and the Need We Have of It.....   | 165 |
| 2. That Humility Is the Foundation of All Virtues.....  | 168 |
| 3. In Which It Is Shown More in Detail How Humility Is the Foundation of All Virtues, by Going Through the Chief of Them .....  | 171 |
| 4. Of the Particular Need in Which They Stand of This Virtue, Whose Profession It Is to Help on the Salvation of Their Neighbor .....                                     | 176 |
| 5. Of the First Degree of Humility, Which Is to Make Little Account of Oneself and Always Think Poorly of Oneself..   | 187 |
| 6. Of Self-Knowledge as the Root, and the Sole and Necessary Means to Attain Humility.....  | 190 |
| 7. Of Another Main Motive for a Man to Know Himself and Gain Humility, Which Is the Consideration of His Sins....   | 193 |
| 8. How We Should So Exercise Ourselves in Self-Knowledge as Not to Be Discouraged or Lose Confidence.....   | 197 |
| 9. Of the Good Things and Great Advantages That There Are in the Exercise of Self-Knowledge.....  | 201 |
| 10. That Self-Knowledge Does Not Bring Discouragement, but Rather Courage and Strength.....   | 205 |
| 11. Of Other Great Goods and Advantages That There Are in Self-Knowledge .....  | 208 |
| 12. How Much It Behooves Us to Exercise Ourselves in Self-Knowledge .....   | 211 |
| 13. Of the Second Degree of Humility, Explaining in What It Consists .....  | 216 |
| 14. Of Some Degrees and Steps Whereby to Mount to the Perfection of This Second Degree of Humility.....   | 221 |
| 15. Of the Fourth Step, Which Is to Desire to Be Run Down, and Go for Little or Nothing, and to Rejoice Therein.....  | 226 |
| 16. That the Perfection of Humility and Other Virtues Lies in Doing the Acts Thereof with Delight and Pleasure, and How Important This Is for Perseverance in Virtue..... | 231 |
| 17. A Further Explanation of the Perfection That Must Be Secured to Mount to This Second Degree of Humility.....  | 234 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 18. Of Some Means to Gain This Second Degree of Humility, and Particularly the Example of Christ Our Lord.....                                  | 238 |
| 19. Of Some Human Reasons and Considerations That We Have at Hand to Help Us to Be Humble.....  | 242 |
| 20. Of Some Other Human Considerations to Help to Make Us Humble .....  | 245 |
| 21. That a Sure Way to Be Regarded and Esteemed by Men Is to Give Oneself Up to the Virtue of Humility.....                                     | 249 |
| 22. That Humility Is the Means to Attain True Peace of Soul, and We Shall Never Arrive at That without It.....                                  | 254 |
| 23. Of Another Manner of Means More Effectual for Gaining the Virtue of Humility: By Practising It.....   | 260 |
| 24. What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples.....   | 266 |
| 25. Of the Exercise of Humility That We Have in Religion.....   | 272 |
| 26. That We Must Be on Our Guard against Uttering Words That May Redound to Our Praise.....   | 276 |
| 27. How We Should Exercise Ourselves at Meditation in the Second Degree of Humility.....  | 280 |
| 28. How We Are to Make the Particular Examen on the Virtue of Humility.....   | 283 |
| 29. How Humility Is Compatible with Seeking to Be Regarded and Esteemed by Men.....   | 291 |
| 30. Of the Third Degree of Humility.....  | 300 |
| 31. Further Elucidation of the Third Degree of Humility.....  | 306 |
| 32. Further Elucidation of the Same.....  | 309 |
| 33. Further Elucidation of the Third Degree of Humility, and How It Comes Thereof that the Truly Humble Takes Himself for the Least of All..... | 312 |
| 34. How Good and Holy Men Can with Truth Hold Themselves to Be the Least of All and Say that They Are the Greatest Sinners in the World.....    | 318 |
| 35. That This Third Degree of Humility Is the Means to Overcome All Temptations and Obtain the Perfection of All Virtues .....                  | 324 |
| 36. That Humility Is Not Contrary to Magnanimity, but Is the Foundation and Cause Thereof.....  | 327 |
| 37. Of Other Good Things and Great Advantages There Are in This Third Degree of Humility.....   | 334 |
| 38. Of the Great Favors and Benefits That God Does to the Humble, and What Is the Reason Why He Exalts Them So Much.....                        | 339 |

39. How Important It Is for Us to Betake Ourselves to Humility to Make Up Thereby for What Is Wanting to Us in Virtue and Perfection, and That God May Not Humble and Chastise Us..... 342
40. In Which What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples ..... 349

## The Twelfth Treatise

### *On Temptation*

1. That Temptations Cannot Fail to Come in This Life..... 355
2. How Some Are Tempted at the Beginning of Their Entry into Religion, or into the Church, Others Afterwards..... 358
3. Why the Lord Wishes Us to Have Temptations, and of the Utility and Profit That Ensue Upon Them..... 363
4. Of Other Benefits and Advantages That Temptations Bring with Them ..... 365
5. That Temptations Avail Us Greatly to Know and Humble Ourselves, and Have More Recourse to God..... 370
6. That in Temptations the Just Are Further Proved and Purified, and Take Root Better in Virtue..... 372
7. That Temptations Make a Man Diligent and Fervent..... 378
8. That the Saints and Servants of God Not Only Do Not Grow Sorrowful over Their Temptations, but Rather Rejoice for the Profit They Make Thereby..... 381
9. That in Temptations One Learns Lessons Not for Oneself Only, but for Others..... 383
10. Here Begins the Enumeration of Remedies Against Temptations, and First on the Part of the Mind, the Strength and Cheerfulness Which We Should Keep in Dealing with Them ..... 387
11. How Little It Is That the Devil Can Do against Us..... 388
12. That We Should Draw Great Courage and Confidence for Struggling with Temptations from the Consideration That God Is Looking at Us..... 392
13. Of Two Excellent Reasons for Fighting with Great Courage and Confidence under Temptation..... 394
14. That God Permits No One to Be Tempted beyond His Strength, and That We Must Not Be Discouraged at the Temptation Growing or Continuing..... 395

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 15. That to Distrust Ourselves, and Place Our Whole Confidence in God Is a Great Means to Overcome Temptations, and Why God So Readily Comes to the Help of Those Who Trust in Him..... | 399 |
| 16. Of Prayer as a Remedy: Some Ejaculatory Prayers Suitable for Time of Temptation.....  | 402 |
| 17. Of Two Other Remedies against Temptation.....   | 404 |
| 18. Of Two Other Chief Remedies, Which Are to Resist Temptation in Its Beginnings, and Never to Be Idle.....  | 405 |
| 19. Of Temptations Which Come Under the Appearance of Good, and that the Great Remedy for All Such Temptations Is to Recognize and Hold Them for What They Are.....                     | 408 |
| 20. How We Should Behave in Temptations of Evil and Impure Thoughts, and of Remedies against Them.....  | 412 |
| 21. That in Different Temptations We Should Behave Differently as to Our Manner of Resisting Them.....  | 419 |
| 22. Some Important Pieces of Advice for the Time of Temptation .....  | 421 |

## The Thirteenth Treatise

### *Of Inordinate Affection for Kindred*

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. How Important It Is for a Religious to Avoid Visits to Relations and Journeys to His Own Native Place.....   | 429 |
| 2. That a Religious Should Also Avoid, as Far as Possible, Being Visited by His Relations and Any Communication with Them by Letter.....                  | 436 |
| 3. That Even though It Be under Plea of Preaching, a Religious Should Shun Intercourse with His Relations and Visits to His Native Place.....             | 439 |
| 4. That a Religious Should Stand Particularly on His Guard against Occupying Himself with the Business Affairs of His Relations .....                     | 442 |
| 5. What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples.....  | 445 |
| 6. Of Other Evils and Losses Caused by Affection for Kindred, and How Christ Our Redeemer Taught Us to Keep Out of Their Way.....                         | 448 |
| 7. How This Temptation Is Apt to Disguise Itself Not Only under the Appearance of Piety, but of That of Duty, and the Remedy to be Applied Thereunto..... | 451 |



## The Fourteenth Treatise

### *On Joy and Sadness*

1. Of the Great Mischiefs That Follow from Sadness..... 459
2. In Which Are Given Sundry Reasons Why It Befits Us to Serve God Cheerfully..... 463
3. That the Ordinary Faults into Which We Fall Should Not Be Enough to Make Us Abandon This Cheerfulness..... 468
4. Of the Roots and Causes of Sadness, and Its Remedies..... 470
5. That Recourse to Prayer Is a Grand Means for Getting Rid of Sadness ..... 474
6. Of Another Very Ordinary Root of Sadness, Which Is the Not Going on As We Should Do in the Service of God; and of the Great Cheerfulness That Comes of a Good Conscience ..... 476
7. That There Is Such a Thing as Good and Holy Sadness..... 481

## The Fifteenth Treatise

### *On Our Treasures in Jesus Christ*

1. Of the Treasures and Great Blessings That We Have in Christ ..... 489
2. How Profitable and Pleasing to God Is Meditation on the Passion of Christ Our Redeemer..... 500
3. Of the Method to Be Followed in Meditating the Passion of Christ Our Redeemer, and of the Sentiment of Compassion Which We Should Draw from Thence..... 502
4. Of the Sentiment of Sorrow and Contrition for Our Sins, Which We Should Gather from the Meditation on the Passion of Christ Our Lord..... 506
5. Of the Sentiment of Love of God..... 511
6. Of the Sentiments of Gratitude and Thanksgiving..... 514
7. Of the Sentiments of Admiration and Hope..... 518
8. Of the Imitation of Christ as the Fruit Which We Should Gather from Meditation on His Mysteries..... 523
9. In Which Is Established by Sundry Examples How Profitable and Agreeable to God Is Meditation on the Passion of Christ Our Redeemer..... 527

# The Sixteenth Treatise

## *On Holy Communion and the Mass*

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. Of the Inestimable Benefit and Great Love That the Lord Has Shown Us in the Institution of This Divine Sacrament .....  | 533 |
| 2. Of the Excellent and Wonderful Things That Faith Teaches for Our Belief in This Divine Sacrament.....   | 539 |
| 3. Here Begins the Discourse on the Preparation Which the Excellence and Dignity of the Divine Sacrament Requires  | 548 |
| 4. Of the Cleanness and Purity, Not Only from Mortal Sins, but Also from Venial Sins and Imperfections, with Which We Should Approach Holy Communion.....  | 551 |
| 5. Of a More Particular Disposition and Preparation Where-with We Should Approach This Divine Sacrament.....   | 555 |
| 6. Other Considerations and Modes of Preparation, Very Useful for Holy Communion.....  | 558 |
| 7. What We Are to Do after Having Received the Divine Sacrament, and What Should Be Our Thanksgiving.....  | 562 |
| 8. Of Other Methods of Thanksgiving.....   | 564 |
| 9. Of the Fruit That We Should Gather from Holy Communion  | 566 |
| 10. That the Frequentation of Holy Communion Is a Great Remedy against All Temptations, and Particularly for the Preservation of Chastity.....   | 569 |
| 11. Of the Chief Fruit to Be Gathered from Holy Communion, Which Is Our Union with and Transformation into Christ  | 572 |
| 12. Of Another Main Fruit Which We Should Gather from Holy Communion, Which Is to Offer and Resign Ourselves Entirely into the Hands of God; and of the Preparation and Thanksgiving to Be Made Conformably Thereto..... | 575 |
| 13. Seeing That This Divine Sacrament Works Such Wonderful Effects, What Is the Reason Why Some Who Frequent It Do Not Experience Them in Themselves.....  | 582 |
| 14. Of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.....   | 587 |
| 15. How to Hear Mass.....  | 595 |
| 16. Some Examples on the Devotion of Hearing Mass, and Saying It Every Day, and the Reverence That We Should Have in Assisting at It.....  | 606 |

## NINTH TREATISE

## ON MORTIFICATION





## CHAPTER I

### *That We Must Join Mortification to Prayer, and That These Two Things Must Help One Another*

**I**T is good to join prayer to fasting, said the angel Raphael to Toby when he made himself known unto him (Tob. xii. 8). The holy Fathers by "fasting" commonly understand whatsoever belongs to penance and mortification of the flesh; and accordingly they consider mortification and prayer as the two principal means we have to advance in perfection, and which ought accordingly to be inseparable companions. St. Bernard upon the words of the Canticle: *Who is she that ascends by the desert like a wreath of smoke composed of divers aromatic spices of myrrh and incense, diffusing its odor around?* (Cant. iii. 6) says that myrrh and incense, which are the symbols of mortification and prayer, ought always to accompany us; it is by them we must raise ourselves to the height of perfection and render ourselves a sweet-smelling odor before the throne of God; for the one is of little or no profit to us without the other. For he who only mortifies his flesh without humbling his flesh and does not lay himself out for prayer, becomes proud and deserves to have these words of the prophet applied unto him: *Shall I feed upon the flesh of bulls? Or shall I drink the blood of goats?* (Psalm xlix. 13). These sacrifices of flesh and blood alone are not pleasing unto God. And on the other hand, he who gives himself to prayer and forgets mortification shall hear what Christ our Redeemer says in the Gospel: *Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not what I tell you?* (Luke vi. 46), and also that of the Wise Man, saying: *If anyone turneth his ears from hearkening to the law, his prayer shall be rejected as execrable* (Prov. xxviii. 9). Your prayer will not be pleasing to God if you do not put into action His

will. St. Augustine says that, as there were two altars in the Temple of Solomon, the one without, where they slew the victims they were to sacrifice, and the other within the Holy of Holies, upon which they offered incense composed of various aromatic spices; so there must also be two altars in us, the one interior in the heart to offer to Him the incense of prayer, according to those words of St. Matthew: *But when thou wouldst pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret* (Matt. vi. 6), the other exterior in the body, which must be by mortification. Thus mortification and prayer march hand in hand together; for if mortification be a necessary disposition to prayer, prayer is also the means to arrive at perfect mortification.

As to the first point, that mortification is a necessary disposition to prayer, it is a truth that all saints and masters of the spiritual life teach us. They say that, as we cannot write upon a skin of parchment if it be not well and evenly scraped and all the flesh taken off, so if the affections and bad inclinations of the flesh be not rooted out of our soul, it has not the disposition it ought to have for our Lord to write and imprint upon it the characters of His grace and wisdom. *To whom will God teach knowledge, says the Prophet Isaias, and to whom will he give ears and understanding to understand his secrets? To them that are weaned from milk and put away from the breast* (Isaias xxviii. 9); that is to say, to those who for His love have removed and weaned themselves from the comforts and pleasures of the world and the appetites and desires of the flesh. To enter into our heart, God looks for quiet and repose and much peace and stillness in our soul. *His abode is made in peace* (Psalm lxxv. 3). Even pagan philosophers understood this; they all acknowledged that for our soul to become wise it must first be quiet and tranquil, which is when the passions and appetites are mortified and still, a time when there are no violent passions with their

disorderly motions to trouble the peace of the soul and blind the eyes of reason, as the passions do when they are excited. It is proper to passion to blind the reason and diminish the liberty of our free will. You see it in a man in a fit of temper, how his anger deprives him of his judgment and makes him look like a lunatic and a madman. If you ask him: "How came you to say or do this?" he answers, "I was not in my right mind." But when the passions are mortified and still, the understanding is left clear to discern what is good, and the will more free to embrace it, and in this way a man comes to make himself wise and virtuous. Now God our Lord also requires this peace and quiet to repose in a soul and pour into it His wisdom and divine gifts; and the means to find this peace is mortification of our passions and disorderly appetites, and so Isaias calls it the fruit and effect of justice. *And the work of justice shall be peace* (Isaias xxxii. 17). St. Augustine explains this very well in that saying of the prophet, *Justice and peace have kissed* (Psalm lxxxiv. 11). "You seek peace without doing justice; do justice and you shall find peace. These two things are so united, so closely intertwined with one another, that the one cannot go without the other. If you love not justice, peace will not love you nor come to you"—*Fac iustitiam et habebis pacem, ut osculentur se iustitia et pax. Si non amaveris iustitiam, pacem non habebis, quia duae amicae sunt iustitia et pax, ipsae se osculantur: si amicam iustitiam non amaveris, non te amabit pax nec veniet ad te.* Peace is obtained by war. If you have no mind to make war on yourself by mortifying, contradicting, and overcoming yourself, you will never acquire that peace which is so necessary for prayer. "What hinders and troubles thee more," says that holy man (Å Kempis) than the unmortified affection of thy heart?" These passions, these appetites and evil inclinations that you have, disturb you at prayer and will not let you make way in it; that it is that troubles you therein; that it is

that disturbs you at it and makes such a din and racket in your soul as to awaken you from that sweet sleep—or, rather, never let you enter into the repose of it.

When a man has eaten to excess at supper, he cannot sleep nor be quiet at night because of the indigestions and gross vapors that arise in him, which vex him in such a way that he goes turning over from one side to another without being able to lie still. The same happens at meditation. Our heart is laden and weighed down by reason of disorderly self-love, of our craving to gratify our appetites, of our desire to be regarded and esteemed, of our great eagerness for the accomplishment of our own will—all which things so cumber the heart and raise in it such vapors, such figures and representations, as to leave no room for recollection and gathering up of the soul in God. So they explain what Christ our Lord says in the Gospel: *Look to it that your hearts be not overcharged with gluttony and drunkenness and the cares of this life* (Luke xxi. 34), which is to be understood not only of the drunkenness that comes of wine, but of all other things of this world, according to the word of the Prophet Isaias: *Listen, thou drunkard, drunk not with wine* (Isaias li. 21). Out of an unmortified heart there arises a thick cloud that bars and banishes the presence of God in the soul. And this is what the Apostle St. Paul says: *The animal man perceiveth not nor understandeth the things of the Spirit of God* (I Cor. ii. 14), because they are too delicate, and he too gross and material. Thus it is needful to reduce and attenuate oneself by mortification.

Hence will be understood the solution of a considerable doubt: How is it that, prayer being on the one hand a thing so sweet and luscious—praying being to converse and deal with God, *whose conversation hath no bitterness nor his company any tediousness, but great joy and gladness* (Wisdom viii. 16)—and being on the other hand so profitable and necessary, nevertheless it becomes to us so difficult, and



we go to it with such reluctance, and so few are given to prayer? St. Bonaventure says: "There are some at prayer as it were by force, like puppies tied to a stake." The reason is what we have been saying. Prayer of itself is not difficult, but mortification is, and much so, and mortification is the necessary disposition for prayer; and because we have not this disposition, therefore prayer becomes to us so laborious and difficult. We see here in the natural order that the difficulty is not in introducing what Schoolmen call the *form*, but in disposing the subject to receive it. Otherwise, see in a green log the work that it takes for the fire to get the greenness out of it, the volume of smoke that arises, the time that is needed to dispose it; but once it is disposed, the fire enters in as into its own home without any difficulty. So in our own case, the difficulty is in getting rid of the thick smoke of our passions, in mortifying our disorderly appetites, in uprooting and detaching ourselves from the things of earth; once that is done, the mind will go to God with great facility and alacrity and enjoy dealing and conversing with Him. Every man enjoys conversing and dealing with his like; and so the mortified man, as being now spiritualized and likened to God by mortification, enjoys conversing and dealing with God, and God also is glad to converse and deal with him. *My delights are to be with the children of men* (Prov. viii. 31). But when a man is full of passions and disorderly appetites; when petty honor, petty affection, whim, amusement, and comfort have a hold on him, such a one feels much difficulty in conversing and dealing with God because he is very unlike God in character and enjoys dealing with company like himself about earthly and low things. *They have become abominable as the things they loved* (Osee ix. 10).

One of those holy Fathers used to say: As when water is troubled it is impossible to see your face in it, or anything else, so if the heart be not cleansed and purified from affections of earth which trouble and disturb it, and at rest



from vain and irrelevant cares, it cannot see the face of God in prayer, that is, the profoundness of His mysteries; nor will the Lord discover Himself to such. *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God* (Matt. v. 8). Prayer is a spiritual view of the mysteries and works of God; and as to see well with the eyes of the body they must be kept clean and bright, so to see well the works of God with the eyes of the soul it is needful to keep the heart clean and bright. St. Augustine says: "Do you wish to see God? Think first of cleansing your heart, and whatever you see there that displeases God, take it away."

Abbot Isaac, as Cassian relates, used to illustrate this by a comparison. He used to say that our soul was like a very light feather, which, if not moistened or weighed down by anything else, but left pure and clean of all nastiness, at the slightest breath of air rises at once from the earth and goes fluttering here and there; but if it is wet or has any dirt adhering to it, that weight does not allow it to rise or mount on high, but keeps it down to earth and buried in the mud: so our soul, if it is pure and clean, rises at once and mounts up to God by the light, soft breeze of consideration and meditation; but if it is glued down and attached to the things of earth and laden with passions and disorderly appetites, these things weigh it down and keep it so oppressed as not to let it rise to the things of heaven or make a good meditation. The holy Abbot Nilus said: "If Moses was forbidden to approach the burning bush until he had taken off his shoes, how do you expect to arrive to see God, and treat with Him and converse with Him, being full of passions and affections for dead things?"

In the Fourth Book of Kings we have an example which shows well the peace and quiet we should have in our affections to enter into meditation and deal with God. When Joram, King of Israel, and Josaphat, King of Juda, and the King of Edom were on their way to fight the King of Moab, as they were on their march through the desert, the water

ran short and the whole army was perishing with thirst. Whereupon they went to consult the Prophet Eliseus; and the King of Israel, who was a bad man and an idolater, said to him: "How is this? Why has God gathered us three kings together here to deliver us over to the Moabites?" Eliseus replied: *What have I to do with thee? Go to the prophets of thy father and thy mother; as the Lord of Hosts liveth, in whose presence I stand, if it were not for my reverence for the presence of Josaphat, King of Juda, I would never have attended to thee, or looked at thee: but now bring me a musician* (IV Kings iii. 13-15). He rebuked him with zeal and holy anger, throwing in his teeth his sins and idolatries; but finally, out of regard for King Josaphat, who was a good and holy man, he was ready to declare the mercies which the Lord was about to show them on that expedition, giving them at once abundance of water and afterwards victory over their enemies. But because his indignation and zeal, although holy, had somewhat discomposed and troubled him, he bade them bring him a musician, and when he came, and he had been quieted and pacified by the music, he began to tell the wonders that the Lord intended to work on their behalf. But if after a good and holy outburst of emotion it was necessary for a saintly man to tranquilize and quiet himself to treat with God and receive His answer, what is to be said at such an outburst when it is not only not good, but imperfect and evil?

As for the second point, that prayer is a means to attain mortification, we have spoken of it at length in the treatise On Prayer, and it is also the fruit which we should gather from prayer, and any prayer that has not mortification for sister and companion the saints hold in suspicion. And with good reason; for as to forge a piece of ironwork it is not enough to soften it with fire, but it is necessary to form it by blows of the hammer to give it the figure that we desire, so it is not enough to soften our heart by the fire of meditation and devotion, if we do not finish

it off with the hammer of mortification to work our soul and clean it of the evil tendencies that it has and form it to the needful shapes of virtue. The delight of prayer and the sweetness of the love of God should facilitate the labor and difficulty there is in mortification, and thereby animate and strengthen us to deny our will and overcome the evil of our character. And we should not stop meditation until we attain by the grace of the Lord to this perfect mortification of our passions, of which we stand so much in need, and which the saints and all Holy Writ so much commend to us.

St. Augustine on that text of Genesis: *The child Isaac grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day of his weaning* (Gen. xxi. 8) asks why it is that Holy Scripture relates the birth of the child Isaac, that son of promise and desire in whom all nations were to be blessed, and there was no feasting over his birth; and says that they circumcised him on the eighth day, which was what the day of solemn baptism is with us, and yet here there was no feasting; and afterwards when they weaned him and put aloe on the breasts of the mother, and the child wept because it was taken away from the milk, then his father made high festival and a grand banquet. The saint says that we must refer it to some spiritual meaning to get the solution; and that what the Holy Ghost wishes us to understand hereby is that spiritual feasting and rejoicing should be when one grows and becomes a perfect man and is no longer one of those of whom the Apostle says: *As to babes, I gave you milk and not solid food* (I Cor. iii. 2). Applying this more to ourselves, what he wishes to say to us is this, that it is not matter of gladness and rejoicing to the order nor to our superiors, who are our spiritual fathers, when you are born in religion by entering there, nor when they receive you into it at the end of your novitiate, but when they see you weaned and ceasing to be a child, and you have no longer any taste for the dainties and amusements of children, but know how

to eat your bread, crumb and crust, and that they can treat you as a spiritual and mortified man.

Besides, meditation has another connection and particular relationship with mortification, inasmuch as it is not only a means to gain it, but is itself a great mortification of the flesh. So says Holy Writ by the Wise Man: *Virtuous watching will waste away the flesh* (Ecclus. xxxi. 1) : *Frequent meditation is an affliction of the flesh* (Eccles. xii. 12). This is also what Holy Scripture gives us to understand by the wrestling which the patriarch Jacob had all night with the angel, from whence we are told that he remained lame (Gen. xxxii. 32). And we see by experience that people who give themselves much to these mental exercises become weak, pale, and infirm, because such exercises are a blunt file that weakens and mortifies the flesh and wears away strength and health; and thus in every way meditation is a great aid to mortification.

## CHAPTER II

### *In What Mortification Consists, and the Need in Which We Stand of It*

TO go to the root of the matter we must presuppose in the first place that in our soul there are two chief parts, which theologians call the upper and the lower portions, or, in other and clearer words, reason and sensitive appetite. Before sin, in that blessed state of innocence and original justice in which God created man, this inferior portion was perfectly subject to the superior, appetite to reason, as the less noble to the more noble and the born slave to his master. *I found that God made man well ordered and right* (Eccles. vii. 30). God did not create man in that disordered condition in which we now are; but without any difficulty or contradiction, with much ease and facility, appetite obeyed reason, and man proceeded to love his Cre-



ator and employ himself wholly in His service with nothing to hinder or disturb him. The sensitive appetite was then so subject and submissive to reason that no reaction or temptation of the flesh could arise—unless the man himself freely sought it. We were not then tempted to anger, nor to envy, nor to gluttony, nor to lust, nor to any other evil desire unless we of our own will chose to entertain it. But as by sin man's reason rebelled against God, so also his sensitive appetite rebelled against reason. *I do not the good that I would do, but the evil that I would not that I do*, says the Apostle Paul (Rom. vii. 19). Entirely against your will, and for all your dislike of it, there arise in your sensitive appetite motions and impulses contrary to reason.

And further, if man had not sinned, the body would have been disposed for any work that the soul chose to carry on, without feeling in itself any let or hindrance. But now *this body that is corrupt weighs down the soul* (Wisdom ix. 15). Of many things of which the soul feels herself capable and desirous, the body gets in the way. As when we go on a journey mounted on a sorry hack, that shakes our bones as we ride it, continually stumbles, gets tired, is unmanageable at times, starts at a shadow, and even takes to lying down unexpectedly, such at present is our body.

"This is the penalty of disobedience," says St. Augustine, "recoiling upon man himself, that whereas he has disobeyed God, now in turn he is not obeyed by himself."

Theologians say with Bede that by original sin man was "stripped of the gifts of grace, and wounded in those of nature"—*spoliatus gratuitis et vulneratus in naturalibus*. He was wounded and vitiated in his nature, inasmuch as his understanding was darkened for understanding the things of God; his free will weakened; his inclination for good enfeebled; his appetite headstrong for evil; his memory wild and wandering; his imagination restless and unquiet, so that we can scarcely recite one Our Father with



our thought fixed on God, but at once, almost before we are aware of it, it steals off and wanders from home and ranges without stopping all the world over. Our senses, again, are envious, our flesh filthy and ill-inclined; finally, our whole nature is so wounded and corrupted by sin that it does not take the course which it took before, nor can do now what it could before. He who before his sin loved God more than himself, now since his sin loves himself more than God; he is ever in love with himself, desirous of doing his own will, inclined to gratify his appetites and to let his passions and evil desires run away with him, even though they be against reason and against God.

Further, we must observe that, though by baptism we are delivered from original sin, which was the cause of this upset, nevertheless we are not delivered from this loss of control of our appetite and its rebellion against reason and against God, which theologians and saints call *fomes peccati*, the food and incentive to sin. God our Lord by His just and high judgment and arrangement has been pleased to leave in us this rebellion and contradiction to repress our pride, and in punishment for it, that we might always walk in humility, seeing our misery and vile condition. *When man was in honor he did not understand, but was likened to brute animals and made similar to them* (Psalm xlviii. 21). God created man in great honor and dignity, adorned him and beautified him with many supernatural gifts and graces, and he would not recognize what he had received nor be grateful for it. In consequence he deserved that God should despoil and deprive him of it and he should be left like the beasts, feeling in himself bestial desires and appetites, that he might know himself and be humbled and have no occasion for pride, as indeed we have none if we only know ourselves, but much ever to confound and humble us.

Secondly, we must lay down another main foundation in the matter, which follows from the first. It is that this appetite of ours, so irregular and disorderly—this evil and

perverse inclination of our flesh—is the greatest obstacle and hindrance to our making progress in the way of virtue. This is what we commonly say, that our flesh is our greatest enemy since thence arise all our temptations and falls, as the Apostle St. James says: *Whence are these wars and quarrels amongst you? Is it not from the lusts that war in your members?* (James iv. 1). This our sensuality and concupiscence, this disorderly self-love that we bear to ourselves, is the cause of all our wars, of all our sins, and of all the faults and imperfections that we fall into. And also this is the greatest difficulty that we find in the way of virtue. Even philosophers know this by the light of natural reason. Aristotle says that the whole difficulty of being a good and virtuous man lies in curbing and moderating pleasures and repugnances. Epictetus reduces the whole of philosophy to these two short words, *Endure and refrain*. And this is the experience of all; for no man sins except to escape some difficulty and hardship, or to gain some pleasure and delight instead of refraining from it. One man sins by love and desire of riches, another by greedy ambition of honor, another for the attainment of some fleshly and sensual pleasure, another to escape the difficulty and hardship there is in keeping the commandments of God and the Church, because he finds it very hard to love his enemy, to fast, to confess his shameful and secret sins. All sins spring from this source; and not only sins, but all faults and imperfections in the way of virtue.

Hereby it will be readily understood in what mortification consists; it consists in regulating what was irregular, in ordering and moderating our passions and evil inclinations and our disorderly self-love. In the words of Christ our Redeemer: *If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me* (Matt. xvi. 24). St. Jerome says: “He denies himself and takes up his cross who before was unchaste and becomes now chaste and pure, who before was intemperate and becomes

now very abstemious, who was before timid and weak and becomes now strong and constant." That is to deny oneself, to make oneself other than one was before. And this is the need that we have of mortification. St. Basil adds: "Observe, He first says, *let him deny himself*, and then, *and follow me*." If you do not first this duty of denying and breaking in your own will and mortifying your evil inclinations and passions, you will find many occasions and obstacles to hinder you from following Christ; you must first smooth and level the road by mortification. Therefore mortification is laid down as the foundation, not only of perfection, but of Christian life. This is the cross that we must always take up on our shoulders, if we wish to follow Christ—*ever bearing in our body the mortification of Jesus* (II Cor. iv. 10). This is what Job said: *Man's life is a warfare on earth* (Job vii. 1), because, as St. Paul says, *the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, for these two are contrary to one another* (Gal. v. 17).

This those glorious Fathers and doctors of the Church, Gregory and Ambrose, say is the true fortitude of the servants of God. It consists not in strength of the arms of the body, but in the virtue of the soul, in overcoming one's flesh, in contradicting one's appetites and desires, in despising the delights and satisfactions of this life, and in bearing well the hardships and adversities that occur. It is more to govern oneself and be master of one's passions and senses than to rule and subject others to oneself. *Better is the patient man than the strong, and better he that is master of his own mind than he that stormeth cities* (Prov. xvi. 32), for our own evil inclinations and passions are more serious foes than external enemies, as St. Ambrose says. And, speaking of the great power which Joseph attained, he says that he was great and did more in governing and being master of himself, not consenting to commit adultery with the lady of the house where he served (Gen. xxxix. 9), than

afterwards in ruling and governing the whole kingdom of Egypt. And St. Chrysostom says that David, in conquering and overcoming himself and not seeking to revenge himself on Saul (I Kings xviii. 6; xxiv. 7), whom he might have killed in the cave, did more than in overcoming the giant Goliath. The spoils of this victory he deposited, not in the city of the earthly Jerusalem, but in that Jerusalem above that is in heaven; and there came forth to meet him, singing his praises, not the women of Israel, as when he overcame Goliath, but the host of angels, rejoicing on high and marveling at his virtue and fortitude.

### CHAPTER III

*That One of the Greatest Chastisements of God Is to Give a Man Over to His Appetites and Desires, Abandoning Him So That He Goes After Them*

**B**ETTER to understand the necessity we are under of mortifying our flesh and appetites and to animate us to take up arms against this enemy, it imports much to know what a great opposing power and enemy it is; so great that the saints say that one of the greatest chastisements of God, where He shows His anger most, is by giving over the sinner to the hands of this enemy, leaving him to his appetites and desires as in the hands of cruel executioners. They allege many passages of Holy Scripture, as that of the prophet: *My people did not hear my voice, and Israel did not attend to me, and I gave them over to follow the desires of their heart: they shall go their own ways* (Psalm lxxx. 12-13). And St. Paul, speaking of the heathen philosophers and their pride, says: *Knowing God, they did not glorify him as God, or render thanks, but became vain in their thought: therefore God gave them over to the desires of their heart, to uncleanness, to dishonor their own bodies one with another* (Rom. i. 21-24). St. Ambrose takes notice



that this *giving over* on the part of God, of which we read in many places of Scripture, must not be understood as though God incited anyone to evil or made him fall into sin, but simply allowed those appetites and desires in them, which they had conceived in their heart, to come to birth; and so aided and egged on by the devil, they came to put them in execution.

What a great chastisement this is, is well seen by what follows from it. The Apostle goes on to describe what happened to those proud philosophers under this chastisement and how they were treated by that cruel enemy to whom God gave them over. It is impossible to utter or exaggerate in words the extremity of misery to which they were brought. Their enemy dragged them through all manner of sins and did not stop until he plunged them into sins filthy, foul, abominable, and unutterable. *God gave them over to ignominious passions* (Rom. i. 26). Woe to you, what will this your enemy prepare for you, this fierce and indomitable beast, if once you let yourself fall into his clutches! "Would you have me tell you," St. Ambrose says, "how he will treat you and what he will prepare for you? Like a hard-mouthed wild horse, that carries its rider from quagmire to quagmire and from hole to hole till he goes with him over a precipice." So will this appetite of yours treat you if you do not tame and mortify and master it. It will carry you from sin to sin and from vice to vice, and never stop till it precipitates you into most grievous sins and plunges with you into the depth of hell. So says Ecclesiasticus (xviii. 30): *Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thine own will. If thou givest thy soul its lusts, it will make thee a joy to thine enemies.* Nothing so feasts the eyes of our enemies the devils as to see us given over to our appetites and fancies, for they will make us such as all hell conjoined could not make us. So the Wise Man begs God very earnestly not to send him such a scourge and chastisement: *O Lord, God of my life, and my soul, give me*



*not over to this appetite, so shameless and unbridled; let it not run away with me* (Ecclus. xxiii. 4-6). With reason do the saints say that there is no greater sign of God's anger than when He leaves the sinner to go after his own pleasure and by the taste of his own palate, following his appetites and desires. When the physician lets the sick man eat and drink as he likes, it is a sign of death; he leaves him as one past recovery. Now this is what God does with the sinner when He is very angry with him. He leaves him to do as he likes; and what is it that a man so out of health and so ill-inclined may be expected to like except what does him harm and causes death? Hereby we understand the unhappy and dangerous state of those who take it to be happiness and a grand thing to have their own way in everything.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### *Of Holy Hatred of Oneself, and the Spirit of Mortification and Penance That Is Born of It*

**I**F we consider well what has been said, that will be enough to engender in us that hatred and holy abhorrence of ourselves which Christ our Redeemer commends to us so much in His holy Gospel, saying that without it we cannot be His disciples. *If any man cometh to me, and hateth not . . . yea even his own soul, he cannot be my disciple* (Luke xiv. 26). What is more necessary to this end than to know that our body is the greatest opponent and enemy that we have—a mortal enemy, the greatest traitor that ever has been seen, who goes about seeking the death, yea, the everlasting death, of him who gives him to eat and supplies all his necessities; who for a little pleasure thinks nothing of defying God and casting the soul into hell for ever and ever? If they told anyone: "Know that one of your household, and of those who eat and drink at your

table, is plotting treason to kill you," what fear would that inspire? And if they said: "Know further that so great is the hatred and enmity that he bears against you that he is quite ready to accept death if only he can kill you; he knows well that thereupon they are sure at once to seize him and put him to death; nevertheless, he is minded to risk his own life to take away yours;" how would the man hearing that be struck with fear and sudden alarms at dinner, at going to bed, at all hours, lest his enemy might come then and give him a blow that might prove fatal! And if he could discover who the traitor was, what hatred would he conceive and what vengeance would he take on him! Now this is our body, which eats and sleeps with us and knows very well that in doing harm to our soul it is doing harm also to itself and in casting the soul into hell it must go there with it; and nevertheless, to gratify its own taste, ventures all and sticks at nothing. See if we have not reason to abhor it! How many times has this your enemy made a place for you in hell! How many times has it made you offend that Infinite Goodness! Of how many spiritual blessings has it deprived you! How often does it put your salvation in danger every hour! Who, then, will not be indignant and conceive a holy anger against one who has done him so much harm, deprived him of so much good, and thrown him into so many dangers every hour! If we abhor the devil and hold him for our deadly enemy for the war he makes on us and the harm he does us, our flesh is a still greater enemy, for it makes on us a more cruel and a more continual war; and there is very little that the devils could do, if they did not find on their side this flesh and sensuality to aid them in making war upon us.

This is what made the saints have such a hatred and abhorrence of themselves; hence there sprang up in them that great spirit of mortification and penance to avenge themselves on this their enemy and keep him subject and submissive. This made them go always in fear of giving any

satisfaction and comfort to their body, thinking that this was to supply arms to their enemy, and that he might thereby gather force and strength to do them harm. St. Augustine says: "Let us not aid nor give strength to the body, lest it make war on the spirit"—*Ne praebeamus vires illicitas corpori nostro, ne committat bellum adversus spiritum nostrum*. And mortify it that it may not get the upper hand. As the Wise Man says: "*He that bringeth up a servant daintily from childhood, will afterwards find him rebellious* (Prov. xxix. 21).

The holy monks of old went so assiduously about this exercise, making it their aim to mortify and diminish the strength of this enemy, that, when other means sufficed not, they undertook excessive bodily labors to subdue and break in their body—as Palladius tells of a monk who, when much fatigued with thoughts of vanity and pride which he could not shake off, bethought him of taking a basket and carrying on his shoulders a great heap of earth from place to place. Being asked why he did that, he replied: "I am vexing him who vexes me." The same is told of St. Macarius; and of St. Dorotheus it is related that he did penance and much afflicted his body. Once someone, seeing him so hard worked, asked him: "Why do you thus torment your body?" He replied, "Because it is at drawn daggers with me." The glorious St. Bernard, kindling with holy hatred and anger against his body as against his deadly enemy, said: "Let God arise; let this armed enemy fall; let him fall and be crushed, this foe, this despiser of God, this lover of himself, this friend of the world, this slave of the devil. What think you? Certainly, if you think aught, you will say with me, 'He is guilty of death; let him be crucified, let him be crucified!'"

With this force and energy we must go to work mortifying our flesh and bringing it into subjection that it may not rise to a consequence to which it is not entitled and drag with it the spirit and the reason, especially since, once

this enemy is conquered, the devil also will be conquered. As the devils make war upon us and try to overcome us, using our flesh as their instrument, so we should make war upon the devils and overcome them by mortifying it and contradicting it. St. Augustine on these words: *I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty, I so fight, not as one beating the air, but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection* (I Cor. ix. 26), well advises us: "Chastise, then, your body; mortify your passions and evil inclinations, and in this manner you will overcome the devils, for in this way Paul teaches us to fight them." When a captain who is on the frontier of the Moors goes to make a sudden attack on them, any Moor that he holds prisoner he claps into the dungeon and leaves him there in irons that he may not rise up against him and assist his enemies; this is what we must do, subjecting and mortifying our flesh, that it may not join the party of our enemies.

## CHAPTER V

### *That All Our Spiritual Advancement and Perfection Consists in Mortification*

HENCE all the saints and masters of spiritual life have come to the conclusion that all our advancement and perfection consists in mortification. "You will advance just so much as you do violence to yourself," says St. Jerome. He says with Job (xxxviii. 13) that perfect wisdom and perfect fear of God *is not found in the land of them that live pleasantly*; that is, according to their own will. As of arable land, when they let it bear what it will, that is, thistles and thorns, they say that it *rests*; and when they force it to bear wheat or anything of that sort, they say that it *labors*, so when one lives according to his caprices and fancies, we say that he has a pleasant time of it. But in such a land, says St. Jerome, there is not found true wis-



dom, but only in the land of them that labor hard and mortify themselves and deny their appetites. This is the rule and measure whereby the saints measure the virtue and spiritual advancement of each and everybody. Would you, therefore, know what progress you have made in virtue? Examine what you have done to mortify yourself, to what extent you have overcome and curbed your passions and evil inclinations, how you stand for humility and patience, whether love of the things of this world and of flesh and blood is dead in you. It is in this, and not in sweetness and consolation in prayer, that you will see whether you have profited or not. We read of our holy Father Ignatius that he made greater account of mortification than of prayer, and by that measure he formed his judgment of persons. And our Father Francis Borgia, when anyone extolled or commended another to him as a saint, "He will be so indeed," said he, "if he be truly mortified." Blossius compares a mortified servant of God to a ripe bunch of grapes, sweet and pleasing to the taste; and one that is not mortified to a bunch of grapes sour, bitter, and harsh to the palate, according to the words of the Prophet Isaias: *I expected from my vine that it should yield me good grapes to make wine withal, and it has given me only wild ones* (Isaias v. 4). The difference there is between the children of God and those of the world is that these follow the motions of their passions and have no idea of mortification, but those that are of Christ aim at mortifying and crucifying their affections and appetites and not being governed by them, but by the spirit and reason (Gal. v. 24).

It is true that Christian perfection does not essentially consist in mortification, but in charity and love of God; and that man will be the more perfect, the more he is united with God by love. But as a stone raised from the ground, as soon as the impediments are removed which keep it there contrary to its natural inclination, falls with a rush to the center, which is its natural place, so our soul, which



is a spiritual substance and created for God, as soon as it is clear of the impediments and obstacles of its disorderly appetites and bad inclinations, at once by the aid of divine grace goes to God, as to its center and last end, and to His loving embrace. St. Augustine says very well that all things move according to the bias they have; light things moving up, as air and fire; heavy things down, as earth and water. What bias is in the elements and natural bodies, that is love in rational creatures; and as natural things move according to the bias that they have, so rational creatures move according to the love that predominates and reigns in them, for that is their bias. If love of the things here below, the craving for honor and reputation, the doing of our own will and the seeking of our own comforts, predominates in us, then our motions and desires will be sensual and earthly. But if by mortification we strip ourselves of the love of all sensual things, then the love of our Creator will predominate in us and will be our bias, and our heart will go straight to God more nimbly than the stone to its center. "Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee"—*Fecisti nos, Domine, ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec in te requiescat* (St. Augustine, "Confessions," I). That is why the saints measure our advancement and perfection by the measure of our mortification, for he who is great in mortification will be great in love of God and great in perfection.

On that text of the psalm: *As the hart thirsteth after the fountains of water, so doth my soul thirst after thee, my God* (Psalm xli. 2), St. Augustine says: "The hart kills the serpents it encounters and, when they are dead, is very thirsty and runs with great speed and nimbleness to the water springs." Would you know the reason why you have not much thirst and desire after perfection? The reason is that you do not kill the serpents as the hart does. "The serpents are our vices and disorderly passions; kill and mortify those serpents, and forthwith you will have

a great thirst after virtue and perfection"—*Serpentes vitia sunt; consume serpentes iniquitatis, tunc amplius desiderabis fontem veritatis*. Your soul will forthwith love and desire God as the hart the running waters. Thus at the rate at which mortification goes, at the same rate will perfection and love of God go. And elsewhere he says: "Is charity growing? Then cupidity is diminishing. Is charity perfect? Then cupidity is nowhere"—*Augmentum caritatis, diminutio cupiditatis: perfectio, nulla cupiditas*. As gold is more and more purified and refined, the more the alloy that it contains is wasted away and consumed, so charity and love of God are perfected and augmented, the more the inordinate love of ourselves and of all earthly things is diminished and made an end of. And when it shall be entirely consumed and made an end of, then charity and love of God will be entirely perfect and pure. Cassian tells of the Abbot John that, being on his deathbed, his disciples gathered round him, as sons are wont to do round their parents at that hour, and earnestly begged him to say something to them for their consolation and spiritual advancement—some short instruction how to attain perfection. He heaved a deep sigh and said: "Never have I done my own will; and along with that I tell you another thing, which is also of great importance—I have never taught another anything but what I had first put in practice myself."

## CHAPTER VI

*That Mortification Is Especially Necessary for Religious,  
Particularly for Such as Have to Do with Their  
Neighbor*

**T**HIS practice of mortification is proper to all the servants of God, and all have need of it in order every day to fall in with the will of God. But particularly is it proper

to religious, for we renounced the world and came into religion for this purpose; and this is what St. Benedict says, that to be a religious is to change and alter one's habits. *Promitto conversionem morum meorum.* This is what we profess in religion and this is what we must continue doing by mortification, to *strip ourselves of the old man and put on the new*, as St. Paul says (Col. iii. 9). And so St. Bernard said to those who were entering religion: "See that the spirit only enter here and the body be left outside;" giving them to understand that in religion our object must not be to gratify our body and live according to its appetites and inclinations, but all our care must be for the soul and the spirit, according to that saying of the Apostle: *Walk according to the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the desires of the flesh* (Gal. v. 16). This it is to *walk in the spirit*—a thing so recommended and desired by the servants of God—to live according to the better part of ourselves, which is the spirit and reason, and not according to the inferior part, which is the flesh and sensuality. Cassian says that it was the common agreement and tradition of those ancient Fathers, and one much borne out by experience, that a man could not advance, nor even stay long in religion, unless he set about in earnest to mortify his will and appetites, for these are very contrary to the standard which obtains in religion.

While this is very befitting for all religious, it is most of all necessary to those of us whose institute brings us across our neighbor. St. Chrysostom very well proves that mortification of the passions is most necessary for those who for the help of their neighbor dwell and converse in the midst of towns; for in them those wild beasts (so he calls our passions) find much more food to sustain them in the great occasions which arise there. The soldier who never takes the field may dissemble his weakness; but, when he takes the field, he shows what he is. So, says St. Chrysostom, he who stays in his corner hides his faults; but he who

goes out to wrestle with the world and to be a spectacle to it must needs be a man of distinguished virtue and mortification.

Further, to gain over those with whom we deal, it is necessary to accommodate ourselves and throw ourselves into their attitude, so far as is possible, according to that saying of the Apostle: *I made myself all things to all men, that I might save all* (I Cor. ix. 22). It is easily seen how much mortification is necessary for this. Philosophers say that the pupil of the eye, the part where the impressions of all color are received and vision is formed, has not any color. And so it was necessary that it should be in order that it might be capable of receiving in itself the impressions of all colors and seeing them all as they are; for if it were of any color, it could perceive no color but that: *Intus existens prohibet externum*—"What is within shuts out what is without." If it were green, all that it saw would seem to us green; and if it were pink, all would appear to us pink. Thus it is necessary for you to set aside your natural temper and have your passions in complete mortification and be quite master of yourself in order that other people's tempers may find toleration and acceptance in you, and you may be able to deal with and accommodate yourself to all to gain all, as St. Paul did. It is not the spirit of religion, nor of perfection, to tie yourself to those of your own temperament and humor, so that, because you are choleric, you fit in only with the choleric; or because you are phlegmatic, you set your face against the choleric; and much less would it be the spirit of perfection and religion to tie yourself to those of your own nation. Would you not take it for a misfortune to have eyes that could see only one color? But a much greater misfortune is it to have a will so petty and ill conditioned as to be inclined only to those of your own nation or of your own natural temperament. Charity embraces all because it loves its neighbor for God and the sake of God; and thus it makes no difference between bar-



barian or Scythian, or any other sort of people. *Where there is no gentile nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian nor Scythian, but Christ is all their good, and Christ is in all* (Col. iii. 11). Charity would fain find place in its heart for all because it regards all as sons of God and brethren of Christ. For this it may readily be seen what need there is for mortification.

Besides this, mortification is very necessary to preserve amongst us that union and fraternal charity, so much commended to us by Christ our Redeemer, Who would have us thereby known for His disciples (John xiii. 35). What makes war on this union and fraternal charity is self-seeking, looking after one's own tastes and conveniences, one's own honor and reputation. Let anyone enter into himself and he will see that every time he fails in charity, it is through seeking and striving after something of that sort or wanting not to lose it and yield it to another. Now mortification it is that rids us of all that and smooths the way for charity, which *seeketh not her own* (I Cor. xiii. 5). And so says St. Ambrose: "Whoever wishes to please and give satisfaction to all, must seek in all things not his own utility and profit, but the utility and profit of his brethren, as the Apostle did," and admonishes us to do. *Take no account of your own interests, but of what is convenient for others* (Phil. ii. 4).

## CHAPTER VII

### *Of Two Sorts of Mortification and Penance, and How the Society Embraces and Practises Both*

**T**HE glorious Augustine on those words of St. Matthew: *From the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away* (Matt. xi. 12), says there are two sorts of penance and mortification. The one is corporal, which chastises and afflicts



the body and is what we call exterior penance, as disciplines, fastings, haircloth, a hard bed, poor clothes, rough diet, and the like, which afflict and chastise the flesh and withdraw from it its comfort and delight. The other sort of mortification, St. Augustine says, is loftier and more precious. It consists in ruling and governing the motions of appetite, struggling daily against its vicious and evil inclinations, setting aside our own judgment, overcoming our anger, repressing our impatience, restraining our craving for delicate food, our eyes, our tongue, and all our senses and motions. Whoever does this, breaking through the wall of his flesh, his passions and appetites, mounts up and enters with violence and forces his way into the kingdom of heaven. These are the men of might, the valiant men, who take heaven by storm. Then interior and spiritual mortification is more excellent than the former, inasmuch as the taming of the spirit and trampling underfoot of honor and reputation comes to much more than afflicting of the flesh, taking disciplines, and wearing hairshirts. And as this penance is more excellent and precious, so also is it more difficult and likely to cost more, because the greater a thing is, the more costly. This is also the doctrine of St. Gregory in many places, and of St. Dorotheus and other saints.

The Society embraces and practises both these sorts of penance. As to the first, although our Father did not see fit to leave directions for ordinary penances appointed and determined by rule and to be taken as of obligation, but on just consideration the manner of life in the Society is common as to the exterior, yet he left in another way very good provision for this, as we will say presently. Many just considerations moved our Father to establish and enact that the manner of living in the Society should be common as to the exterior. For the means must be proportionate to the end; and the end of the Society being to labor, not only for its own advancement, but also for the advancement

and salvation of our neighbor, it was very fit that we should wear a habit common to all clerics of good standing, the better thereby to gain access to all sorts and conditions of men. Thus with religious we are religious; with clerics, clerics; and with lay people we wear a habit not different from that of the secular clergy. Add to this that the Society was instituted in Luther's time, when heretics hated religious and their habits; wherefore, to have a more free access to them and to be the better able to dispute with them and convince them (which is a function proper to our institute), it was convenient that we should have nothing extraordinary in our habit that might distinguish us from other respectable ecclesiastics; for that would have caused us to be held in abhorrence by the heretics ere ever we began to deal with them, and so one of the chief ends for which God instituted the Society would have been frustrated.

Besides, if we wore a rough habit, possibly that sinful neighbor of yours would not dare to come to you, thinking that you and your behavior must be as rough as your habit. Be it rather a common habit, received and recognized by all, that thus we may have more easy access to all sorts of people, and none may have a horror of dealing with us. Our Father would have us even by our habit make ourselves all things to all men, the better to gain all, imitating herein the example of Christ our Redeemer, of Whom St. Augustine says, and St. Thomas quotes him, that the better to accommodate Himself for mixing and dealing with men, and for their greater spiritual advantage, He chose to take up an every-day exterior rather than the austerity and severity of the Baptist.

As for other and exterior penances, although he did not leave them appointed and determined by rule, yet there is a living rule, the superior, who gives and assigns to each according to his need. Our Father says that these penances may be taken in two ways, either what each one shall

choose for himself for his better advancement in spirit (with permission, however, of the superior), or when the superior shall oblige him to them for the same end. He judged this more suitable in the Society than to determine them by rule, because a dead rule could not be equal for all, since not all have equal strength for these penances; and if there was one prescription for all, he who could not do so much would be distressed at not being able to march in line with the rest. Thus as one medicine or one diet and regimen does not suit all sick persons, neither does it suit all to do the same penances. Some penances are better suited for youth, others for old age; some for cases of sickness, others for health; some for one who joins innocent, others for him who joins, as they say, as full of wounds of sin as a sieve of holes.

And so St. Augustine says, and St. Basil, that no one should be surprised at the same methods' not being observed with all in religion, some doing more penance than others, because equality here would be a very great inequality. And not only is this diversity and difference proper for different persons, but even for the same person in difference of needs and seasons; one penance is good for time of temptation and dryness, another in time of peace and devotion; one to preserve devotion, another to recover it after it has been lost. For this reason our Father would not lay down in the Society a certain fixed scale of penances for all, but left it to the discretion of the superior, who is our spiritual physician, according to the strength and need of each one to appoint and allow to some more, to others less; which is according to the rule which the angel gave to St. Pacomius on the part of God, where it was ordered that the superior was in this way to appoint the penances which each religious was to do.

Thus if there are not in the Society any ordinary penances appointed by rule, as there are commonly in other religious orders, this is not because there are no corporal

penances in the Society or because in it there is no great esteem and veneration of those which other orders according to their institute laudably observe, the variety of which institutes is the beauty of the Church; but because our founder considered it more suitable to our institute and more in accordance with its ends and purposes and better in agreement with the ancient doctrine of the saints to leave the measure and manner of them to the prudence and charity of the superior. This arrangement has not led to there being fewer penances in the Society, but rather to there being more, and to their being taken with more good will and devotion. And thus we see, by the bounty and mercy of the Lord, that there are used and practised more penances of this sort in the Society than could have been enacted by rule. May it please the Lord that this fervor and spirit, so good and so holy and so well borne out by the practice of the Church of God, may ever go on increasing; and that it may be more necessary to keep us at a walking pace and draw the bridle than to use the spur, as up to this day by the grace of the Lord we have always experienced.

The second sort of penance, which is the mortification of the passions and disorderly self-love, is embraced most particularly in the Society. And this was another of the just considerations which moved our founder not to leave ordinary penances appointed and determined by rule; for he wished us to set our eyes on the interior mortification of our passions and appetites, and that this should be our principal penance, for its being, as we have said, more precious and excellent. Our Father puts in his Constitutions and Rules things of great perfection, things for which great mortification and self-denial are necessary, and wishes our chief study to be in what regards this self-denial and continual mortification and the growing more and more in true and solid virtues and in all perfection. He might have feared, and with reason: If I leave them special ordinary penances marked out, maybe they will stop there and be



content with that, saying: "I keep by rule so many fasts, so many hairshirts and disciplines, and that is enough for me;" and leave out the main thing and what is more to the point, which is the mortification of their passions and the practice of true and solid virtues. Thus he would not leave us anything to rest upon but virtue and interior mortification. He wished our life to be common as to the exterior, that in the interior it might be singular and excellent, accompanied with solid virtues and much mortification, and that in such manner and in such a degree as to redound on to the exterior and mark us for religious. Of this interior mortification we have more need than other religious, since in their case their habit marks them off from the rest of the world, and their sackcloth dress and the asperity of their life gives them credit with the people. But there is nothing of that in the Society, since it is not proper to our institute; hence it needs must be made up from within, and there must be in us so much humility and modesty, so much charity and zeal for souls, and such a union with God, that whoever sees and converses with us may say: "Truly this is a religious of the Society of Jesus; *these are the seed that the Lord hath blessed* (Isaias lxi. 9)." Thus what we should chiefly set our eyes on and excite ourselves to is this interior mortification; and the day that we shall have ceased to practise that, we must understand that we have ceased to live as religious of the Society. That other exterior penance which we use, we must take as a means to gain this, as was said and taught by that apostolic man, our Father Francis Xavier, and is also the doctrine of St. Bonaventure.

Hence will be understood the explanation of a thing that we so often hear talked of, and by the goodness of the Lord experience too—how the Society is very gentle in its ways of proceeding. The gentleness of the Society does not come from there being in it no hard things to do, nor from superiors' having to give way to all our requests, for that would



not be religious life at all. There are hard things, and very hard things, to do in the Society, as we shall presently say. But the explanation is that in the Society all must study mortification and true denial of themselves; all must be very indifferent and resigned to anything that superiors think fit to do with them. This good disposition, this indifference and resignation that we have, is the explanation of the great gentleness that obtains in the Society, as well in the government and commands of superiors as in the obedience of subjects; for all are given over and placed in the hands of their superior as a little clay in the hands of the potter, to do therewith what he will. This was the marvelous artifice and contrivance of our blessed founder, inspired by the Holy Ghost, in insisting so much on this mortification and self-denial, as though he would say: "In the Society there are difficult and arduous things; now that all may be prepared and ready for them, and that superiors may not be afraid and reluctant to order them, let us lay this foundation of mortification and resignation of ourselves; let all understand that they must be as indifferent and resigned in the hands of their superior to do whatever he wishes as is the clay in the hands of the potter, and as a piece of cloth is in the hands of the tailor, who cuts from it as he chooses and where he chooses, this portion for sleeves and that other for skirts; this for the neck, and that for the border of the garment; and one is as good cloth as the other, since it is all of one piece; and what is put to serve in the kitchen is as good as the other that is put for the table, since it was of the same lump, as St. Paul says, *ex eadem massa* (Rom. ix. 20). Thus all were classmates and of the same standing in the Society; and perhaps he who was put to teach the elements of grammar was as able a man as he who was set to teach arts or theology; still the clay does not complain, nor the cloth, *Why hast thou made me so?* (Rom. ix. 20).

Thus the cause and root of the gentleness there is in the Society must be in yourself, in your being very mortified, very resigned and indifferent to everything, and there being in you no resistance or contradiction, either exterior or interior, to all that superiors choose to do with you. Thus, when you do not feel such facility and cheerfulness in orders of obedience and in other things that befall, do not throw the blame on your superior, nor complain of him, but on yourself, that you are not as ready or mortified as you ought to be. The superior does his duty and presupposes that you are a religious and, as such, mortified and indifferent to everything; and that it is not necessary to consult your will nor inquire into your disposition, since you always ought to be disposed and ready for any work which obedience shall command you. Rather the superior does you great honor in taking you for such and in treating and commanding you as such. When a stone is well tooled, with what ease does the mason set it in its place!—he only has to let it drop. But when it is not so, how many blows, how much hammering, how much labor is necessary to lay it!

Hence follows another thing worthy of consideration, and noted by St. Bonaventure, that, though this interior mortification is much more difficult than exterior penances, as we have said, nevertheless one may more easily find a just excuse from exterior penances than from interior mortification. As regards the former, one may say with truth: "I have not strength to fast so much, nor to wear so many hairshirts, nor to take so many disciplines, nor to go barefoot, nor to rise at midnight;" but none can say: "I have not the health and strength to be humble or to be patient or to be obedient and submissive." You might say that you have not virtue sufficient for all the humility and all the obedience and resignation that is found in the Society and is necessary there; but you cannot say: "I have not health enough for that," for what is necessary for it is not

bodily but spiritual strength; strong and weak, healthy and sick, great and small, all can do it with the grace of God if they will.

This is a very great consolation for sundry persons who are often tempted to pusillanimity and discouragement, thinking that they have not the abilities or the stock of natural gifts to gain the end of an institute so high as is ours in the Society. In the First Book of Kings Holy Scripture tells us that Saul sent a message to David, to whom he wished to marry his daughter. David replied: *Who am I to be son-in-law to a king? I am a poor man, I have not shoulders broad enough for that* (I Kings xviii. 23). But the king returned the answer: *The king needeth no dowry, no gifts nor jewels: he wanteth only a hundred foreskins of Philistines, to have vengeance on his enemies*. We may give the same answer here. God needs none of those parts, those abilities and talents that you think—*Thou art my God, since thou hast no need of my goods* (Psalm xv. 2). What He wants is that you should circumcise those Philistines of your appetites and evil inclinations. This is what the Society asks and requires of us; and thus, if you wish, you will be good enough for it. Contrive to be very humble, very indifferent and resigned to all that they ask you to do, and that will be enough. God deliver you from vanity and pride; God deliver you from being a lover of your own ideas and conveniences, from going about in search of silly amusements, and not being clear and straight with your superior; for if that be the sort of person that you are, no other religious order can be a greater difficulty to you than the Society. But to the humble, to the mortified, to the truly poor of spirit, to the indifferent and resigned, to him who has no will of his own, all that is done in the Society becomes easy and very sweet.

We have here reason of thankfulness to God, recognizing the great bounty and benefit that He has done us in this, that, though there are things in the Society of them-

selves difficult and irksome, nevertheless He has made them to us so sweet and agreeable and so easy to bear. As for exterior penances, as we have said, by the bounty of God there are more done than could have been prescribed by rule. And for interior penance and mortification, which St. Augustine says is the greater and more precious of the two, we have in our Rules and Constitutions things of such high perfection and in themselves so difficult as greatly to exceed all exterior penances and mortifications.

Thus, for instance, this having to give an account to the superior and to the prefect of spiritual things of all that passes in our soul, of all our motions, temptations and evil inclinations, and of all our faults and imperfections—nothing less than that is demanded and done in the Society, and it is one of the most substantial ordinances in it—it is plain to see that this is a thing of itself more difficult than fasting and discipline and haircloth. That which he still commands us: “For their greater advancement in spirit and especially for the greater abasement and humiliation of self, all must be content to have all their errors and faults and whatever things are observed and known in them, manifested to superiors by any person whatsoever that shall come to know them out of confession,” is a thing requiring great humility and mortification, not to complain that warning was not given you first and that your fault was made out greater than it was. And, further, you must be prepared to be publicly rebuked, and this not only with cause but even without it. And even when false witnesses are brought against us, our Father requires that we should be not only ready but even glad, without giving occasion for them; and that, as people in the world rejoice in honor and reputation, so we should rejoice in dishonor, injuries, and insults; for the which it is clear how much virtue is necessary. And, further, we must be indifferent to any office, function, and occupation that obedience may choose to lay on us, and for whatever grade in the Society in which it may wish to incor-



porate us. Now there being in the Society such different offices and grades, some higher than others, for a man to be indifferent to the lower and as content in it as if they had set him in a higher position, is a thing of great perfection, for which great mortification is necessary.

You must be ever ready and quite prepared and indifferent to go to any part of the world to exercise these ministrations, not only to another college, but to another province and to any foreign kingdom, to the East and West Indies, to Rome, Germany, England [A.D. 1610], Transylvania, where you may never be able to see kindred and friends, and they lose hope of seeing you. As for poverty, the Society professes a poverty so strict and rigorous that no one may receive or keep any nice thing in his room, not to say eatables, but not so much as a book in which he may underline a passage, or take the volume away with him to another college. And we are to be so denuded and detached from all things that we cannot lock a trunk or a drawer to keep anything, but all must be open and exposed to view, as though to say: "Take it if you will, for it is not mine."

These things and others like them that there are in the Society, it may plainly be seen, are superior both in perfection and in difficulty to all exterior penances and austerities. Thus anyone who has a spirit of severity against himself and a desire to mortify himself much and do great penance, which is a very good spirit to have, will have his hands full in the Society. And though there have been some who, tempted against their vocation, have tried to cover over and palliate their temptation under pretense of finding greater perfection and doing more penance in another order; the truth is that that was not the motive or end that moved them, but their inability to bear the weight of the mortification and perfection that is professed in the Society. Of this we have experience in the confession of the men themselves, and the thing is further declared by the apostolic see. His Holiness Pius V, who was a religious

of the holy Order of St. Dominic, declared so expressly in the bull which he granted to the Society against apostates who went out of it into the world or into any other order except the Carthusians; when, after having referred to the perfection and difficulty and great labor there are involved in the institute of the Society, he exposes the root of the temptation that some have of leaving it or passing to other orders. These are his words: "There are some who from levity of mind and desire to escape the labor which the religious of the Society continually undergo for the salvation of souls, indiscreetly preferring their own private ends to the common good of the Society and of the Christian commonwealth, under false pretenses of being animated by a desire of gaining more perfection and doing more penance, asserted that they could pass to another order, even of mendicants, and so forth." Thus in reality it was no desire of greater perfection or greater penance, but of escaping labor and difficulty, since they did not feel in themselves stock of virtue enough for so much perfection and mortification, such indifference and resignation, as are necessary in the Society. Therefore did our Father insist so much on this mortification, and wishes us to practise it and dwell much upon it, and that it be the continual study and aim of all.

## CHAPTER VIII

*That Mortification Is Not a Hatred, but a True Love, Not of Our Soul Alone, but Even of Our Very Body*

SINCE we have said, and it is the doctrine of the saints, taken from the holy Gospel, that we ought to abhor ourselves, and this seems a very hard thing and contrary to our nature, therefore, that none may take fright at hearing this said nor thence find occasion for being discouraged and abandoning mortification, we will here explain how this is

not a hatred and abhorrence whereby we wish evil, but a true love, not of our soul alone, but of our very body; nay, rather, the failing to mortify ourselves is a true hatred and abhorrence, not of the soul alone, but also of the body.

The glorious St. Augustine on those words of St. Paul: *The spirit lusteth against the flesh* (Gal. v. 17), says: "Far be it, brethren, far be it, that the spirit in lusting against the flesh should abhor and hate the flesh. What, then, does it abhor? The vices of the flesh, its craft and evil inclinations, the resistance of the flesh to reason. As for the flesh, it rather loves it in mortifying and contradicting it, just as the physician does not abhor the sick man, but his sickness; he wars against that; but as for the sick man, he rather loves him." And this is well proved; for to love anyone, as the philosopher says, is to will and desire his good; while to abhor one is to wish evil to come upon him. But he who goes about mortifying his body and combating its appetites and disorderly desires, is seeking and procuring for his body the greatest and highest good, which is eternal repose and glory; and thus he it is that truly loves his body. And he who has no mind to mortify himself, but gives himself to the gratification of his evil inclinations and appetites, is seeking and procuring for his body the greatest evil that he possibly can seek and procure, which is hell for ever and ever; and thus he it is that truly abhors his body. So the prophet says: *He that loveth iniquity, hateth his own soul* (Psalm x. 6), because he is procuring and contriving for it hell for ever and ever. And for the same reason, says St. Augustine, we may say that he abhors also his body, because he is procuring and contriving for it the same evil. And so theologians say that righteous and good men love themselves more than sinners and evil men, not only as regards the soul, but also as regards the body, since they are desiring and procuring for it that true good which is the blessedness of heaven, of which the soul is to partake, and after its fashion the body also. And St. Thomas adds

for this same reason that the righteous man loves his body, not with any common sort of love, but with the love of charity, which is the highest and most profitable love.

This is clearly seen by the example of two sick men, one of whom eats and drinks according to his liking and will not submit to bleeding or take a purge or any medicine; and the other governs himself well, keeping his mouth shut, although he is very thirsty and hungry, and taking the purge, bitter though it be, and submitting to being bled, although it hurts him. It is clear that this second patient loves his life and his body and his health—to gain and keep which he is ready to bear a little suffering and be put on diet and take medicines—better than the other, of whom we rather say that he is cutting his own throat by not submitting to suffer a little thirst and inconvenience. In the same manner it may be argued to our purpose. And so St. Bernard said to some seculars who were horrified at his monks' treating their bodies so badly, saying that they bore a deadly hatred to them: to whom the saint answered that it was they in the world who really detested their bodies, since to give them a little enjoyment of sensual delights they bound them over to everlasting torments; while the monks truly loved their bodies, since they afflicted them for a little time to merit a lasting repose.

This truth was taught us by Christ our Redeemer in the holy Gospel. For after saying: *If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me*, He goes on to give the reason, saying: *For whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall find it* (Matt. xvi. 24-25). St. Augustine writes: "Great and wonderful pronouncement, how a man's love for his own life means the loss of it, and his hatred of it the saving it from loss. If you have loved it badly, then you have hated it; and if you have hated it well, then you have loved it. Happy they who have hated it to save it, lest they should lose it by lov-



ing it. Love it not for this life, lest you lose it for life everlasting," as the same Lord says: *He that hateth his life in this world, preserveth it unto life everlasting* (John ii. 25). And he gives another good reason in confirmation of this. We do not cease to love a thing, he says, because we love something else better. The sick man clearly does not cease to love his foot or his arm for allowing it to be amputated when amputation is necessary to save his life; he loves it well enough, but he loves his life better and allows himself to lose the less to save the greater. And, again, the miser loves his money and desires much to keep it; but nevertheless he divests himself of it and flings it away to buy bread and other necessities of life because, much as he loves his money, he loves his life better and is ready to lose the less to preserve the greater. In like manner a man does not cease to love his flesh by mortifying it, but he loves his soul and life everlasting better; and for his soul and for the attaining of perfection and life everlasting it is needful to mortify and maltreat his flesh; therefore he mortifies and maltreats it accordingly, and this is not abhorrence or lack of love, but it is loving God more and loving more one's own soul and perfection.

## CHAPTER IX

*That He Who Makes No Effort to Mortify Himself Does  
Not Only Not Live the Life of a Spiritual, but Not  
Even of a Rational, Being*

THE glorious Augustine says: "There is one life of beasts, another of angels, another of men. The life of beasts is entirely taken up with things of earth and the satisfaction of their appetites; that of angels is wholly taken up with God and the things of heaven; that of men is midway between these two lives, since man partakes of the one nature and of the other. If he lives according to the spirit,

he becomes like the angels and a companion of them. If he lives according to the flesh, he becomes like the beasts and a companion of them." This agrees with what St. Ambrose says: "He is carnal who follows the inclinations of the flesh; and he is spiritual who shapes his life according to the commandments of God." Thus he who lives according to the appetites of the flesh does not only not live a spiritual life, but falls short of the natural life of man, living the animal life of beasts. This alone should suffice greatly to animate us to mortification, since it is a thing most unworthy of the high birth and nobility of man, who was created in the image and likeness of God and to enjoy Him forever, to come to be like beasts, making himself a servant and a slave of a thing so bestial as the flesh and sensuality, subjecting himself to them and guiding himself thereby, and giving full play to the furious onset of his bestial appetite.

St. Bernard says: "It is a great abuse and disorder for the handmaid to be mistress and give command and for the rightful mistress, who should command, to be turned into a handmaid." This is the disorder and perversity which Solomon saw: *I saw slaves going on horseback, made masters and giving commands, and princes crawling about, serving like slaves* (Eccles. x. 7). Father Master Avila says: "Think you not that it would be a monstrous thing, a portentous sight to all who saw it, for a beast to have a man in bit and bridle, taking him where it would, ruling him whom it ought to serve?" Now of these there are so many, of low and high degree, controlled by the bridle of their bestial appetites, that, just because there are so many, we no longer take it as a thing to stare at, nor are we shocked at the portentous sight, nor does it excite in us any wonder, of which more's the pity. It is told of Diogenes that one day at noon he went walking in the market place at Athens with a candle, looking for something; and when asked, "What are you looking for?" he said: "I am looking to see if I can find a man." "Why, don't you

see the market place full of them?" "These," he said, "are not men, but beasts, since they live not as men but beasts, ruled and guided by their bestial appetites."

St. Augustine brings in here a graceful and apt comparison. What would be generally thought in society of a man who walked with his feet in the air and his head downmost? "That's a tumbler," they would say; "a farcical and ridiculous performance." Now such in the eyes of God and the angels, says St. Augustine, is the man in whom the flesh is mistress and reason the handmaid; he walks topsy-turvy, feet above and head below. Who would not be shocked? Even Seneca felt this and said a thing divinely true: "I am too great and born to too great things, to become the slave of my own body"—*Maior sum, et ad maiora natus, quam ut mancipium fiam mei corporis*—a sentence for a religious and every Christian to carry written on his heart. If a gentile by the mere light of nature attained to feeling this and being shocked at such a spectacle, what may we expect of a Christian, aided by the light of faith, and of a religious, forearmed and favored by so many blessings and benefits of God? He who is not shocked at this, nor resents it, continues St. Augustine, suffers from a perversion of reason and will be a monster more wonderful than a man turned into a beast without resenting it or thinking there was anything particular to see in such a sight.

A philosopher [Galen] relates of himself that in his youth he saw a man setting about in great excitement to unlock a door. Things went wrong, and for all his efforts he could not open it, and all his excitement went for nothing. So angry did he get that he began gnawing the key with his teeth and kicking at the door; and not stopping at that, he began to blaspheme God and foam at the mouth like a raving lunatic, while his eyes looked as though they would start from his head. The philosopher says that, when he saw this, he conceived such a hatred and abhor-

rence of the vice of anger that thereafter no one ever saw him out of temper, that he might not be seen in similar anger. All this should go to aid us to live like men of reason and not let the appetites of the flesh carry us away. St. Jerome on that text of Job (i. 1): *There was a man in the land of Hus, whose name was Job*, says he was a man indeed, and gives the reason that we have said, because the flesh in him was not mistress to give orders, but kept subject and submissive, he weighing everything that he did in the scales of reason, according to that saying of Scripture: *The lust of sin shall be under thy power and thou shalt hold sway over it* (Gen. iv. 7).

## CHAPTER X

### *That There Is Greater Trouble in Not Practising Mortification Than in Practising It*

SOMEONE may say: I see well the advantage and necessity of mortification; but there comes before me the difficulty and labor, and that withdraws me from it. To this I answer in the first place with St. Basil: If for bodily health we willingly take medicines that are very bitter and allow the physician or surgeon to cut and burn where it seems good to him; if for property and money men face such great difficulties and dangers by land and sea, it will be but reasonable to face some difficulty and undergo some labor for the spiritual health of our soul and the attainment of the everlasting good things of heavenly glory. But since after all we are naturally prone to shun labor and trouble, and where we are forced to suffer something, we would wish to have as little of it as possible, I say in the second place that there is greater trouble in shunning mortification than in mortifying oneself. St. Augustine says: "Thou hast ordered it, O Lord, and so it is, that the ill-controlled mind be a torment and pain to itself"—*Iussisti*,



*Domine, et sic est, ut poena sua sibi sit omnis animus inordinatus.* The interior revolt of appetite against reason and of reason against God causes in man great torment and restlessness. And so it is in general in all things; for what thing is there in the world that, being out of order, is not naturally restless and discontented? What pains are caused by a dislocated bone! What violence is suffered by the element out of its natural place! But it being a thing so proper and natural to a reasonable man to live according to reason, how can it be but that his very nature shall protest, and his own conscience bark, when he lives in a disorderly and unreasonable way? Very well did holy Job say: *Who hath ever resisted God, and lived at peace?* (Job ix. 4). There is no peace or rest to be had by living at that rate. And so St. John in the Apocalypse says: *They who adored the beast found no joy day or night* (Apoc. xiv. 11). If you serve this beast of your flesh and sensuality, you will never know ease or rest.

Medical men in the world say that the health and good disposition of the body is in the due tempering and proportion of the humors and that, when they are out of that proportion and temperament which it is natural for them to have, sicknesses and pains are caused; and when they are well attempered and proportioned, there is health, and they cause outwardly cheerfulness and bodily vigor. So the health and good disposition of our soul consist in the proportion and moderation of the passions, which are its humors. When they are not so tempered and mortified, they cause spiritual sicknesses. When they are so, there are in the soul health and good disposition, producing in him who has them great cheerfulness and tranquillity. Further, they say, and say well, that the passions in our heart are like winds at sea, for that as the winds toss and disturb the sea, so the passions toss and disturb the heart with their disorderly cravings and motions. Now there rises the passion of anger to trouble and disturb us; now

the wind of pride and vainglory blows; now impatience carries us away, now envy. Therefore the Prophet Isaias said: *The wicked are as a troubled sea that cannot rest* (Isaias lvii. 20). Thus, if you succeed in commanding the winds of your passions and appetites and laying them to rest, mortifying and moderating them by reason, you will have great tranquillity and peace; but while you do not attend to this, you will be in a storm.

That it may be more clearly seen that greater trouble and a heavier cross await him who shuns mortification than him who mortifies himself, let us descend to particular cases of daily experience. See how you are when you have let the passion of anger or impatience have its way, and you have spoken a passionate word to your brother or done something else against good order and edification—what sadness, what disquiet, what disturbance and regret you feel within you. Tell me if the pain and trouble you feel over that are not greater than what you could have felt in mortifying yourself. There is no doubt about that.

See the alarms and perturbations that an unmortified religious feels, one who is not indifferent and resigned for anything and everything that obedience may choose to do with him. One only thing to which he has a repugnance is enough to make him walk in perpetual pain and distress, because that is the thing that is ever intruding upon him and taking the first place in his thoughts. And though it has never crossed the mind of superiors to employ him for that purpose, yet after all it is an order that might be and often is given, and he does not know but what it will be; he lives in continual alarm and anxiety about their commanding him that. When one has a sore on his foot, he thinks that everyone he meets is going to tread on him there; so the unmortified man thinks that they are going to hit upon his sore point. But the mortified man, who is indifferent and resigned for all, is always content and joyful and has nothing to fear.

Again, consider the pain and disappointment that rankles in the heart of the proud man when he sees himself thrust into a corner and forgotten, no account made of him, no posts of distinction and honor, such as he would desire, entrusted to him. See again the fear and anxiety that he is in when such things are entrusted to him and he is charged with some public performance, thinking how he is to succeed and whether perchance he may not incur disgrace where he thought to gain honor. On every side his pride afflicts and torments him—miserable state! And so it is generally in all other things. Your passions are your torturers and executioners, tormenting you perpetually so long as you make no effort to mortify them. And this is the truth, be your desire accomplished or not. So long as it is not accomplished, this desire deferred afflicts and wears his soul; *hope deferred afflicteth the soul* (Prov. xiii. 12); and when his desire comes to be accomplished and he gets his own way, that very having it is again a pain and torment. “Woe to me! I am only having my own way, I have carried my point at last. I get no merit for this since I do it for my own satisfaction and because I wanted it.” All is turned into vinegar.

Add to this the remorse of conscience that he carries with him who makes no effort to mortify himself and do his duty. For what contentment can a religious find, who came into religion for no other end than to study his spiritual improvement and seek perfection, and is doing nothing of the sort? His life must be one of pain and grief. And the same we may say of every man, according to his state, when he is not doing his duty. When we are not doing our duty, the gnawing worm of conscience that we carry within us continually pricks us with remorse and gnaws our vitals. Father Master Avila says very well: “Place on one side of the scale the afflictions which he may undergo who is diligent, lives a fervent life, and studies his own mortification, and in the other what the tepid and

unmortified religious suffers because he has no mind to undergo those other sufferings, and you will find the one a thousand times greater than the other."

It is a wonderful thing that he finds more pleasure and satisfaction who serves the Lord with diligence in watching, and praying, and all other hardship and mortification that come in his way, than another who is tepid and lax does in talk and pastime, self-indulgence, and doing his own will. The tepid man laughs outwardly and gnaws his heart within; the just and upright man weeps, but has joy in his heart. The path of the tepid and lazy, says the Wise Man (Prov. xv. 19), is like walking on thorns; so God says by the Prophet Osee: *I will hedge in thy way with thorns* (Osee ii. 6). In those pleasures God has put sad stings of remorse of conscience; in those pastimes, bitterness; and in doing one's own will, pain and torment. There the tepid and lazy man finds thorns that prick and pierce his heart. But *the way of the just is smooth and without stumbling-block* (Prov. xv. 19). Oh, the peace and contentment of the good religious, the mortified man, who goes steadily about the work of his spiritual progress, doing what a good religious ought to do! There is no contentment to equal his. Every day we experience this, that, when we vigorously go about the service of God, we are very cheerful and content; but when we grow tepid and careless, then we are sad and disconsolate; and this is often the cause of our fits of sadness and despondency, as we shall say in its place. Thus by shunning smaller troubles one comes to fall into others greater. *Whoso feareth the hoarfrost, the snow shall fall upon him* (Job vi. 16). You were saying that it was to avoid trouble that you omitted to mortify yourself. I say that if for no other reason, for this very reason you ought to contrive to mortify yourself to live in peace and quiet—how much the more so when mortification brings so many other advantages!



## CHAPTER XI

*Here We Begin to Treat of That Practice of Mortification*

THE principal means that we can take on our part to gain this mortification and victory over ourselves, is to practise ourselves much in denying our own will and contradicting our desires, and giving no satisfaction to our flesh nor letting it have its own way. In this manner, little by little, you overcome nature, uproot vice and passion, and introduce and plant virtue. St. Dorotheus gives us very profitable advice hereon. When you are molested with any passion or bad inclination, if you yield to your weakness and choose to put the thing in execution, be sure, he says, that this passion and inclination will take deeper root and grow stronger and will trouble you more from that time onwards. But if you manfully resist the passion and evil inclination, it will progressively diminish and every day have less strength to combat and molest you till it comes to lose all its strength and give you no further trouble or annoyance. This is also very important when there is question of temptations, as we shall declare later on. It is very important to resist first beginnings, to the end that the evil habit may not bring us little by little into greater difficulties.

The saints say that we have to deal with our body as a horseman mounted on a furious and ill-bridled horse, which may with industry and courage be mastered and made to go where you wish and at the pace you wish. So it is necessary to rein in tight and not neglect the spur; in that manner you will be master of your body and make of it what you want, that it shall go where you wish and at the pace that you wish. But if you have not the courage and dexterity to govern it and master it, it will master you and fling you down some precipice. The way that men are wont to take with an animal that has some bad propensity, in

order to cure it, is not to let it indulge the same. Now this must also be the way for us to take to be rid of the evil propensities and inclinations of our flesh, not to allow any indulgence in what it likes, but contradict and vigorously oppose all its appetites and desires.

To animate us more to this exercise, it will be a great help always to act on the principle that we laid down at the beginning, that this outward man, our flesh and sensuality, is the greatest adversary and enemy that we have, and as such is always at work making mischief for us, lusting against the spirit, against reason, and against God. One of the chief reasons why the saints say that self-knowledge is a most efficacious means to overcome all temptations is that he who practises this, well understanding his own weakness and misery, as soon as an evil thought or desire makes its appearance, sees at once that it is a temptation of the enemy, going about to snare and overthrow him, and stands on his guard and gives it no credence nor hearing. But he who does not know himself does not know the temptation when it comes nor take it for such; rather the temptation seems to him very reasonable, and sensuality a necessity, and so he is easily overcome by temptation. It will help you greatly to mortify yourselves if you remember that you carry about with you the greatest enemy you have, and understand that all these impulses and temptations that come to you come of your flesh and sensuality, which as your deadly enemy aims at procuring your evil. Thus you will easily mortify yourself and cast it off, for who will trust his enemy?

St. Bernard affords us another good consideration, saying that we must deal with ourselves and with our body as with a sick man entrusted to our care, who asks for and desires much that would do him harm, and must be refused accordingly; and what is for his good, though he has no taste for it, must be given him, and he made to take it. Oh, if we could succeed in taking ourselves for sick persons,

and steadily held that all these impulses and desires that come to us are sick man's whims and persuasions of our enemy seeking our evil, how easily should we cast them off and overcome them! But if you do not take yourself for a sick man but for a healthy, and do not take yourself for an enemy but for a friend, you are in great danger. How can you resist that which you think is not evil, but good; not a deception, but truth?

St. Dorotheus relates that, when he was in the monastery in charge of the spirituality, and all the monks came to him with their temptations, one day there came to him a monk to give him an account of a temptation that he had to gluttony, which went so far as to make him steal things to eat. He asked him very lovingly why he did this, and he answered that for the hunger that possessed him what was given him at table was not enough. He advised him to go to the abbot and declare his necessity; but to that he made great difficulty, saying that he was too ashamed. "Wait, then," said Dorotheus, "and I will find a remedy for that." So off he went himself to the abbot and gave him an account of the straits the monk was in. The abbot left the case to him, telling him to do whatever he thought proper for a remedy. Thereupon St. Dorotheus called the dispenser and bade him at whatever hour this monk asked for breakfast or lunch to give him all he asked for. The dispenser obeyed and gave things with quite a good grace. Thereupon the patient began to do well and for some days stole nothing; but little by little he reverted to his bad habit. He went with many tears to St. Dorotheus to tell his fault and ask for a penance; for he had this good point about him, that he owned up to his faults at once—a very efficacious means to prevent their going on long. Dorotheus asked him: "Has not the dispenser given you what you asked? Has he ever said No to you?" "The dispenser treats me very well," he replied, "and all that I ask for he gives me; but I am ashamed to go so often to him." "Would

you be ashamed to come to me," said Dorotheus, "seeing that I know your temptation and you have told me all about it?" He said he would not; whereupon he told him to come to him, and he would give him all he wanted, and he must not steal any more. Dorotheus was infirmarian at the time and in a position to treat him well. This satisfied him for several days; but presently he returned to his evil habit and came with many tears and great confusion to tell his fault and ask for a penance. Said St. Dorotheus: "But how is this, brother? You are not ashamed of asking me, and I give you all you want; why do you go on stealing?" He answered: "Father, I don't know how it is, nor why I steal; the vice and evil habit carries me away. I am in no necessity, nor do I eat what I steal, but give it to the ass." And so it was found; for they went to his cell and there he had figs, grapes, apples, and bits of bread, hidden under his bed; and there he left them till they began to go bad; and then, not knowing what to do with them, he took them to the stable and threw them to the ass. Hence we see, says St. Dorotheus, the sad state to which passion and evil habits bring a man and what reason we have to take ourselves for sick men and enemies. This unhappy monk saw well that he was doing wrong and wept and distressed himself greatly for having done it, and yet it seems he could not restrain himself from doing it again. Wherefore the Abbot Niskeron well said that he who lets himself be carried away by passion and bad habits comes to be the servant and slave of the same.

## CHAPTER XII

### *How the Exercise of Mortification Ought to Be Put in Practice*

**M**ORTIFICATION being the principal means available on our part to overcome ourselves, it will be well to descend to particulars as to how to put it into practice.



The general rule that is given in these things is to regard what is most necessary, and first of all endeavor to obtain that. Wherefore begin this exercise by profiting of those occasions of mortification that daily offer themselves, proceeding either from your superiors, from your brethren, or from anyone else. Receive all with a good will and make your profit of them, for so it must be as well for your own peace as for the edification of your neighbor.

We should by rights be so fervent in mortification, since it is so valuable to us, that we should go begging and importuning superiors to mortify us in this thing and in that, to command us what we have most repugnance for, and to penance and reprehend us in private and in public before all. But since you are not so fervent as that, at least receive with patience the occasions of mortification that offer and that God sends you for your exercise and advancement.

Many are the occasions that offer every day; and if one is careful and desirous of mortifying oneself, matter will always be at hand. Sometimes in matters of obedience you will think that they command you the hardest things, and that the whole burden is put upon you whilst there are others at hand who might do something. To every man in the discharge of his office things are apt to occur which give some special trouble and mortification. Well, then, profit by these occasions you have at hand, anticipate them, and believe that the difficulty you find in them is the cross you are to carry to follow Christ. At another time some other subject of mortification will arise from your meat, drink, lodging, or clothing; rejoice, as the rule bids you, that the worst things of the house are given to you. Another time it will happen that a superior will give you a penance or reprehend you when you think that you have not deserved it or, at least, that your fault was not so great as he makes it out and that the matter was reported to him otherwise than as it happened or with gross exaggerations. Be glad of all that; do not excuse yourself, do not complain, do not

try there and then to stand out in your own defense and vindicate your good name with this one and that.

Coming then to the occasions of mortification that arise on the part of our neighbors and brethren with whom we deal and converse, we shall find plenty, sometimes without their meaning or reverting to it and without fault of theirs, at other times through carelessness and negligence, although with no bad intention; and there are at times occasions in which it looks as though they disregarded you and made small account of you. Then if we go on to what is of the immediate sending of the Lord, as sicknesses, temptations and afflictions, and the unequal distribution of His gifts as well natural as supernatural, there are a countless number that every day present themselves without seeking. It is on these occasions that we must practise ourselves in the first place. Such mortifications often come of necessity, and we have to suffer them without seeking them. What we have got to do is to make a virtue of necessity, that suffering, we may suffer with profit. Besides the spiritual advantage there is here, we shall save ourselves much trouble if we take these things with good will. Often the hardship and difficulty which we feel is not so much in the things themselves as in the repugnance and contradiction of our will; and thus embracing them heartily, we shall greatly lighten the labor.

There are other mortifications which we have to do of our own will—they call them “active mortifications” to distinguish them from those already mentioned, which they call “passive,” which we have to suffer even without seeking them—for they are necessary, and thus they must rank with the mortifications which have to be taken in the first place. Of these, some are necessary for anyone to be a good Christian and save his soul, as is the mortifying of oneself in all that hinders the observance of the commandments of God. Others are necessary for one to be a good religious and gain perfection, as is the mortification of one-

self in all that hinders the observance of rules and getting things done well and perfectly. For it is certain that not only all sins, but all faults and imperfections whatever that we fall into in the way of virtue, come of want of mortification. They are all committed either to escape and not undergo some hardship that we feel in doing the right and better thing, or from unwillingness to abstain from some pleasure and delight which we experience in doing what is evil and imperfect. Let us run through them all, and we shall find that if we fail in obedience, in observance of rules, or in temperance, or in silence, or in modesty, or in patience, or in anything else, it is all for want of mortification, from our not braving the hardship that is annexed to this observance or not abstaining from the pleasure and delight which we take in the contrary. Thus, if you wish to be a good religious and attain perfection, you must mortify yourself in these things.

As for a man to be a good Christian and save his soul, it is necessary for him to mortify himself in all that he feels a craving for contrary to the law of God—and therefore Christ our Redeemer said: *Whoever will come after me, let him deny himself* (Matt. xvi. 24), and if he does not deny himself and mortify himself herein, he will not be a good Christian nor be saved—so to be a good religious and attain perfection, it is necessary for you to mortify yourself in all that can be a hindrance thereto. Run, then, through all the actions of the day from morning to night and see what hinders you from keeping the rules and doing your ordinary actions well and perfectly; and face this labor and mortify yourself in the inclination which you have to do a thing badly and imperfectly, and in this way every day your actions will be better and more perfect, and you also will be better and more perfect. The whole hub of our spiritual advancement consists in our bringing ourselves to the point of resolving on this.

Someone once asked the question: "How comes it that on the one hand God gives me good desires and on the other, when occasion offers, I find myself weak and fall into many faults and never succeed in arriving at perfection?" They to whom he proposed it said: "This comes of want of consideration; if you considered this and that, it would help you." And they gave him many considerations, and none of them did him any good. He betook himself to a very experienced old man, who answered him: "This springs not of want of consideration but of want of resolution." That is why we do not get on and never succeed in rooting out our faults and evil propensities. Bring yourself to the point of resolving to mortify yourself in what we have said, and in that way you will attain perfection.

### CHAPTER XIII

#### *How We Should Mortify Ourselves in Lawful Things, and in Necessary Things, Too*

IT would seem that there was nothing more to be said on the practice and exercise of mortification but that we should exercise ourselves right well in the practice of the two manners of mortification above mentioned, since that would suffice for our being good and perfect religious. But that we may do these practices better and be more ready and disposed to do them, the saints and masters of spiritual life lay down another exercise of mortification in things that we might do lawfully. As a good Christian is not content with doing things of obligation that are necessary for salvation, but adds on others of devotion, which they call "works of supererogation"—he is not content with hearing Mass on days of precept, but he will hear it also on weekdays; he recites the rosary of our Lady, and confesses and communicates frequently—so a good religious will not be content with keeping his rules and mortifying himself in all



that is necessary for their observance, but he must contrive to do other mortifications of supererogation to which he is not bound by rule, mortifying himself in some things not obligatory, but things that he might lawfully do.

St. Dorotheus says that there is nothing so helpful for advancement in virtue and gaining peace and tranquillity as curbing one's own will, and teaches us the way that we should take in mortifying ourselves in things that we might do lawfully. You are walking on one side of the street, and there comes over you an impulse to turn your head and look across the road—don't look. You are in company, and there occurs to you a remark very much to the point, likely, you think, to make you pass for a discreet and judicious person—don't say it. The saint gives other examples, going into such details as the following. You have a mind to know what we are going to have for dinner; don't try to find out. You see some new article of furniture in the house; you have a mind to know who sent this or who brought it, whether it is a purchase or a present—don't ask. A guest comes; at once you have a mind to ask: "Who has come? Where does he come from? Where is he going? On what business?"—don't try to know; mortify yourself on that point. This practice, St. Dorotheus says, helps greatly to the creation of a habit of denying our own will; for if we accustom ourselves to curb it in these small things, we shall shortly come to having no will of our own in greater matters. As those who are in training for war practise in time of peace what they have to do in war, making trial of themselves in tournaments and conflicts, which for the time being are sham fights, because so it is necessary to make them dexterous and in practice when real fighting comes; so the religious should accustom himself to mortify and curb his will in lawful things that thus he may be afterwards quick and ready and well trained to mortify himself in regard of things unlawful. St. Bonaventure also teaches this practice of mortification in small

things and things that we might lawfully do, giving the example of plucking or not plucking a flower when you are walking in the garden because, though there is no harm in plucking it, yet to let it alone on purpose to mortify yourself is more pleasing to God. And he says that a servant of God should often say in his heart: "For your love, O Lord, I will not see this, nor hear that, nor taste that morsel, nor take just now this sort of recreation."

Of our Father Francis Borgia it is related that, when he was duke, he was much attached to the sport of hawking and took great delight therein; and when he went to fly a heron, just in the nick of time, when the falcon stooped on her lure and killed it, he would lower his eyes and rob them of their lure, depriving himself of that gratification and enjoyment which with so much labor he had sought all day long. St. Gregory says that it is proper to the servants of God to deprive themselves of lawful things in order to be further removed from things unlawful. On this account those holy Fathers of the Desert had such esteem of this practice and brought up their disciples to it, making them give up their work and do work they had no taste for—in little things and things they might have done without sin or any imperfection, that in all things they might deny their own will and be armed for greater things. And of him who in these light and easy mortifications gave good proof of himself, they had good hopes that he would reach perfection; and they had a poor opinion of anyone else who showed otherwise, thinking that a will accustomed to do what it likes, even in small matters and things of little importance will prove very disinclined afterwards to deny itself in greater things. Hence the Society took the practice which it uses, especially in the beginning with novices, of occupying them in different exercises and offices, making them leave what they have begun and undo what they have done and go back to do it again, that they may not grow up headstrong and self-willed, but from the beginning may

be accustomed to deny their will and their own judgment.

But the saints go further in this exercise of mortification. Not content with accustoming us to deny our own will in lawful things that we might do without sin and any imperfection, they advise us even in those very things that we are bound to attend to, to accustom ourselves to mortify and deny our own will. But someone will say: "How can this be? Are we to give over doing what we are bound to do, to mortify ourselves?" I say no, by no means; that would be ill done: *it is not lawful to do evil that good may come of it* (Rom. iii. 8). How, then, is this to be? The saints have found for it a marvelous contrivance, and it is the teaching of St. Paul. Mark and observe, they say, that you are to do nothing, think nothing, say nothing on a main motive of accomplishing your own will or desires; but before you eat, you must mortify the appetite of gluttony and not eat because you have an appetite and want food, but in obedience to God, Who wishes and commands you to eat to sustain life, as did the Abbot Isidore, of whom Paladius relates that he wept when he went to dinner, and went only out of obedience.

Before you study, you should mortify your desire to study, and then study because God wishes it and commands it and not of your own will and taste. Before you preach or lecture in the professor's chair, mortify the craving and inclination that you have thereto and do not do it to suit your own taste and desire, but because so you are bidden and it is the will of God. In the same way in all other things you must abandon the proper motion of your own will, and do them because God so requires. It is not reasonable that things should lead us captive to go their way, but we should draw them to ourselves and to God, doing them purely for Him. This is what the Apostle says: *Whether ye eat, or drink, or do anything else whatsoever, do all to the glory of God* (I Cor. x. 31). This is a very chief point, a point of high spirituality. We must not do

our actions nor discharge the office which we hold for our own taste and inclination, but purely for God, because He so wishes and commands. We must accustom ourselves to do in all things not our own will but that of God, and delight in them, not because the things are in themselves agreeable or to our taste or conformable to our inclination, but because we do in them the will of God. Whoever shall live in this manner, will not only become accustomed to mortify and deny his own will, but will be doing the will of God in all things, which is a very high exercise of the love of God and of great profit and perfection, as we have said elsewhere.

Wide enough the field that we have opened for this exercise! Thus, whoever shall wish to make his particular examen on mortifying and denying his will—and a very profitable examen that will be—should go little by little by the steps and degrees that we have laid down in the chapters on Examination of Conscience. To begin with, we may make our own particular examen on mortifying ourselves on the occasions that offer without our seeking them, in which there is enough to do for some days and even for many, especially if we go the length of bearing things not only with patience but with joy and cheerfulness, which is the third and most perfect degree of mortification. The second step would be to mortify our will in what disturbs and hinders us from doing well the thing that we have to do to be good religious and keep our rules and proceed with edification, which things are countless. The third step would be to mortify ourselves in some things that we may lawfully do, in this way to accustom and habituate ourselves to deny our own will and be the more ready and better prepared for the time when other and greater occasions shall offer. We may purpose to mortify ourselves in these things so many times in the morning and so many times in the afternoon, beginning with a smaller number and afterwards increasing them according to the progress we make.



And the more frequent these mortifications are, the better, even though they were to complete the full number of their particular examen beads, as we have known some in the Society to do, who mortified themselves that number of times every day and even went beyond the number, as was well approved by the progress they made. Fourthly, we may make this particular examen on those same things that we are bound to do, taking care to do them, not because we like them or have a taste for them, but because such is the will of God, which is a practice that may last for a lifetime, being a thing of great perfection. This examen according to these points may be made by way of conformity to the will of God, taking all things as coming from His hand, and sent us by the loving-kindness of a Father for our greater good and profit. We may reckon that Christ Himself speaks to us, saying: "Child, I would have thee now do or suffer this." In this way it will be easier and sweeter, more profitable and effectual and of greater perfection, because it will be an exercise of the love of God, which renders all things easy and sweet. That reason: "This is the will of God; God here and now wishes and has a mind for this," is a convincing and conclusive argument; it ties feet and hands, and leaves no escape.

We read of our Father Francis Borgia that he once set out late from Valladolid for Simancas, where was the house of probation. It was snowing heavily, and there was blowing a very cold and chilly wind. He arrived late at night, at a time when the novices were already in bed. There he was a long time knocking at the gate, while heavy flakes of snow were falling upon him. As they were in their first sleep, and the gate was far from the house, he got no answer. After a long time they heard him and opened to him. The novices were much distressed at having kept their father so long waiting, and to see him pierced and shivering with cold. The father then said to them with a very gracious and cheerful countenance: "Do not grieve,

my brothers, for I assure you that the Lord has given me great consolation while I was waiting. I was thinking that it was the Lord Who aimed the snowflakes at me and sent the icy winds to blow upon me; and that all that He does He does with infinite delight and satisfaction to Himself; and that I ought to rejoice, considering the satisfaction of God in chastising and afflicting me, and be glad of the joy that He took in that work, as a lion or other brute animal is harried to pieces before a great prince solely to give him pleasure." After this manner we ought to take all occasions of mortification, and this should be our joy and satisfaction in them, the joy and satisfaction of God.

#### CHAPTER XIV

*That We Should Chiefly Mortify Ourselves in That Vice  
or Passion Which Has the Greater Sway Over Us and  
Makes Us Fall into Our Greatest Faults*

**I**N the First Book of Kings Holy Scripture relates that God commanded Saul by the Prophet Samuel utterly to destroy Amalek, leaving, as they say, neither chick nor child, great or small, nor men nor animals nor herds. And, says Holy Writ, *Saul and the people spared King Agag, and the fattest of the cattle large and small, and all that was precious and valuable; but all that was cheap and worn out and worthless they destroyed* (I Kings xv. 9). So there are some who mortify themselves in little trifling things; but in greater things, which are important and make more difference to them, they spare themselves and remain quite alive to the quick. For the information of such persons I say that the chief thing that we should set our eyes upon, to mortify it and offer it to God, should be the most precious. Samuel went thereupon to Saul and reproved him severely on the part of God for what he had done. He made them bring Agag, King of Amalek, before him. *And Agag was*

*brought forth, very fat and shaky, and Samuel hewed him to pieces in Galgala before the Lord (I Kings xv. 32-33). He made a sacrifice of him to God. This, then, must be the chief thing that you are to sacrifice and offer to God by mortification—this Agag of your swollen vanity and pride that has most sway over you, this craving to be regarded and thought much of, this impatience, this asperity of temper that is habitual to you.*

There are some who seem to place all their care and all their holiness and perfection in the exterior, practising a modesty and composure that is very edifying and not letting appear in their exterior any fault; but of interior mortification, which is the most precious and sublime, they take no account, but are all alive and sensitive in respect of their own will and judgment, their honor and reputation. To these we may say, in its measure, what Christ said to the scribes and Pharisees: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who are at much pains with the exterior cleanness of the platters and cups with which ye eat and drink, and within are full of uncleanness, of theft and rapine. Blind Pharisee, make first the inside clean, that the outside may come to be clean also (Matt. xxiii. 25-26).* Cleanse and mortify first the interior, that the exterior may be pure and clean; for if this exterior modesty does not spring from that which is within, from inward peace and maturity of heart, it will be all hypocrisy and pretense. Be not, says Christ our Redeemer, like the whitened sepulchers, that look very fair outside and within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. And in the same chapter, even more to our point, He reproves the same scribes and Pharisees, saying: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who take care not to let go untithed the mint, and the anise, and the cummin, and omit the weightier things of the law, right judgment, mercy, and fidelity to God, and take no account of them (Matt. xxiii. 23).*

This is literally what we have been just saying, that there are some who take great care to mortify themselves in mat-

ters of small moment which cost them nothing; but in what hurts them, in what goes to the quick, there is no touching them. That, then, must be the chief thing that we are to mortify—that passion, or that vice or inclination or bad habit that puts us in greater dangers and makes us fall into greater faults. We see by experience that each one commonly is wont to feel in himself one or two things which alone or chiefly make war upon him, hinder his advancement, and are the cause of all his disorders. We say, then, that it is on this that each one should principally fix his eyes, to rid and root it out of himself by mortification. On the same account we are wont to insist that the particular examen should be made also on this matter, and that it should be mainly dwelt upon in meditation as being each one's principal necessity.

## CHAPTER XV

### *That We Ought Not to Omit Mortifications in Small Things, and How Profitable and Pleasing to God These Mortifications Are*

WE should set our eyes on greater things in such a way as not to leave smaller things unattended to. This admonition is directed against some who drop small mortifications and take no account of them, thinking that they are trifles and that progress and perfection do not lie there. That is a very great mistake. Christ our Redeemer also warns us of it in that very reproof which He gave to the scribes and Pharisees. He did not reprove them for taking care of those trifles, but for leaving the weightier things of the law undone. Nay, He adds at once that it is needful to do also those little things. *Little things*, He says, *must be done, but greater things not omitted* (Matt. xxiii. 23). We often dwell on the importance of taking account of minute and small things and not neglecting them; and in truth it is a point of such importance that it deserves to be often



spoken of, that such great evil may not gain entrance to us as commonly does come in by these small openings. For the present we will only say what makes for our purpose, which shall be to declare two things: first, the great good there is in these small mortifications; secondly, the great evil and loss that may accrue to us if we neglect them.

To start with the first point, how pleasing these mortifications are to God though they be in small things, and of what value and merit they are before Him, that may be well understood from this consideration. In mortification there is not so much to be regarded the thing that we do as the denying and curbing therein of our own will. This is properly that self-mortification and self-denial which Christ our Redeemer asks for in the holy Gospel (Matt. xvi. 24). Now this self-will is as well denied and curbed in small things as in great things, and sometimes more so when they go more against the grain. We experience this many times, that we feel more difficulty over little things than we felt over others that were greater; for, as they say and say very truly, mortification is not so much in the things as in the repugnance of our own will. Thus in every mortification, even in small things, we offer and sacrifice to God our own will, denying it and curbing it for His love and giving Him the most precious and most cherished and best-loved thing that we have got; for we have nothing of greater value or that we cherish and prize more than our own will; and giving that, we give all.

St. Ambrose weighs to this effect that action of David when, being in the field against the Philistines, as Holy Writ tells he desired and said: *Oh, that someone would give me a little water of the cistern of Bethlehem* (I Chron. xi. 17), which was in the rear of the enemy. Hearing this, three gallant knights broke through the midst of the army of the Philistines and brought back a vessel of water from that cistern. And Holy Scripture says: *He would not drink, but sacrificed and offered it to the Lord, pouring it on the*

*ground* (I Chron. xi. 19). A great thing, forsooth, and a great sacrifice, to offer to God a pitcher of water! St. Ambrose says it was a great sacrifice and very agreeable to God; and enough that Holy Scripture relates it for an exploit of David to understand that it was great. But why was it great? Do you know why? says St. Ambrose. He overcame nature, curbed his will in not drinking when he was thirsty, and gave an example to the whole army to endure the thirst. It was not the mere pitcher of water that he offered. It was his will that he offered and sacrificed to God, though in small things; and therefore it was a sacrifice of great value and very agreeable in the sight of His Divine Majesty.

St. Gregory, and St. Ambrose also, gives another example of the same David to this purpose. Holy Scripture relates (II Kings vi.; I Chron. xv.) how David brought the Ark of the Covenant to his city of Sion with a grand procession and solemnity; and as when here [in Spain, A.D. 1606] the procession takes place on Corpus Christi Day, the peasants and common people go before the Blessed Sacrament with their dances and reels, so it is to be believed, says St. Gregory, that on that occasion the multitude and common people danced before the Ark of God. Then the most potent and mighty King David, forgetful of his authority and grandeur, divested himself of his royal robes and joined the dancers, and began to dance, curvet, and play on a musical instrument, *stripping himself bare as a strolling player*, as his wife Michol said, just as if he were a common jester out to give amusement.

St. Gregory can never cease wondering at this deed of David, and says: "I know not what others may think of the deeds and exploits of David—let them think what they like; but as for me, I admire more David dancing reels before the Ark, like a man of vulgar and base condition, than when I hear of his tearing in pieces bears and rending lions or of his felling the giant Goliath with one small

stone and vanquishing the Philistines; because there he overcame others, but here he overcame himself;" and it is more to overcome oneself than to overcome others.

Let us, then, set great value on these mortifications and beware of despising them, lest that befall us which befell Michol, who was shocked and indignant at this behavior of David and despised him in her heart for it and afterwards reproached him for it to his face, for which God afflicted her with barrenness, so that she never had a son all her life long. See if this be not the cause of your barrenness and dryness as well in prayer as in dealing with your neighbor—the fact being that people do not catch on with you and your words do not catch on with them, and thus you have no spiritual children—that you are ashamed to do little mortifications and disdain to go to the superior with small things, thinking that to be an affair for babes and novices and that the like is not for you. Much more ought they to fear this chastisement who make game of others whom they see very observant, mark them as scrupulous and petty-minded persons, and make jokes and witticisms at their expense. This is a thing that may do much harm, and we ought to make great scruple of doing it, for it is doing what in us lies to withdraw others from virtue. Oh, what a good answer David gave Michol: *I will play before the Lord who has chosen and preferred me before thy father, I will sport and dance and demean myself more and more* (II Kings vi. 22); and no mockery or murmuring at me shall make me desist from it. "Fine sport is that," says St. Bernard, "at which Michol is angry and God is pleased; fine sport which is ridiculous to men but a fair spectacle to angels! This is the sport which he followed who said: *We are made a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men* (I Cor. iv. 9). Let us, then, also follow this sport, and make no account of what they say; *Ludamus et illudamur.*" In this way we shall be a spectacle to astonish the world, and win the admiration of angels and greatly please God.

## CHAPTER XVI

*Of the Harm and Mischief That Comes of Neglecting  
Mortification in Small Things*

FROM what has been said it may readily be understood what harm and mischief may ensue from the neglect of mortification in little matters and taking no care about them. We should not look so much at the smallness and minuteness of the thing in which we omit to mortify ourselves as at the fact that we have no mind to deny or curb our will for the love of God, not even in this small matter. And there is another very great and considerable mischief; it is that hereby a man goes on giving license to his will to have his own way in other things also, and thus he becomes wilful and headstrong, fomenting and feeding his own will. The man does not understand the evil and mischief that he is doing herein. This self-will is at first a little lion cub, but at this rate it will grow and become a fierce and masterful lion that cannot be brought to reason. We well know that self-will is the cause and root of all evils and sins and of hell itself. *Cesset propria voluntas, et infernus non erit*, says St. Bernard—"Let there be no self-love and there will be no hell." Now by these mortifications a man systematically curbs his own will, refusing it permission to come out with its own in everything that it desires, which license is apt to be the root and cause of all sins.

Richard of St. Victor says that, since the devil labors to overcome us in small things, thereby to weaken us and so overcome us in matters of grave fault, it is but right and proper that we should labor also to overcome ourselves and mortify ourselves frequently in little things, thereby to shut the door in the devil's face, that he may not overcome us in greater things. He advises us to begin with these small things, that thus we may gather strength by practice and from victory in smaller things mount up little by



little to victory in greater. Cassian also is of the same advice, and gives an example, how, when a motion of anger comes upon you at your pen's not being good or your knife's not cutting well or other like things, the thing to do, he says, is to mortify and repress these disorderly motions though they be in small things, since by this victory, when grave occasions occur afterwards of impatience and injurious language from one's neighbors, the servant of God finds himself possessed of sufficient strength to mortify himself and preserve charity and peace of heart.

Besides, there is another advantage in these small mortifications voluntarily taken up, that thereby another great loss and danger is escaped, as we are taught by the holy man Eusebius, as Theodoret relates in his "*Historia Religiosa*." This holy man practised himself much in them; and when asked why, he answered: "I am training myself against the arts and wiles of the devil and contriving hereby that the great temptations with which he might assail me, of pride, lust, envy, and the like may be turned on to these little things, in which, if I am beaten, I shall not lose much, and if I win, the devil will be greatly put out and affronted, seeing that he could not beat me even in these small things." Let this be well observed, because it is a truth of which God's servants have abundant experience. Understand that, while you progress in this practice of mortification in little things, the devil's temptations will be turned upon that, and your temptations will usually turn on these little things—"Shall I do that mortification? Shall I overcome that repugnance or let it have its way?" Supposing once in awhile you are beaten on this point, you will not lose much. But if you drop this practice, and make it no longer your object to fight with the devil and against the flesh in these small matters, devil and flesh will make war on you with greater temptations, in which if you are beaten, you are undone.

St. Augustine has a story how a Catholic, being provoked by flies that continually tormented him, was visited by a Manichean, to whom he recounted his annoyance. The Manichean thought he had found a fit occasion to insinuate his error, which was, that there were two origins or causes of things: the one of invisible things, which was God; the other, of visible things, which was the devil. (It is against this error that these words are inserted in the Creed: "Of all things visible and invisible.") The Manichean therefore asked him: "Who do you believe was the creator of flies?" The Catholic, who found himself so tormented by these creatures and saw them in such an evil light, durst not say it was God. "But if it was not God," replied the Manichean, "who was it that made them?" The other replied that he thought it was the devil. The Manichean still pressed the argument more home. "But if the devil," he said, "made the flies, what about the bee, who is a bit bigger than the fly; who made her?" The Catholic durst not say that God had created the bee and not the fly, there being very little between them; so he answered that if God had not created the flies, probably He had not created the bees either. The Manichean, perceiving this, by little and little drew him on further, passing from the bee to the grasshopper, a little bigger than the bee; from the grasshopper to the lizard, from the lizard to a bird, from a bird to a sheep, thence to an ox, then to an elephant, and last of all to man himself. "And hereby he persuaded this poor man," says St. Augustine, "that God had not created man." See into what an abyss of misery he fell because he could not patiently suffer one small mortification caused by the biting of the flies! So, says St. Augustine, do you beware lest the devil deceive you when you are tempted and annoyed by flies. Bird-catchers, he says, are wont to put flies on their spring-traps to catch certain birds; so did the devil with this unhappy man. See, then, that he does not catch you also when you are annoyed and tempted, sad and melancholy over little

things, for with these flies the devil is apt to catch and lead men little by little to greater things.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *Three Important Admonitions Upon This Subject*

THERE are here three admonitions to be given, regarding three sorts of persons, for the consolation of the one, and the disenchantment of the other two. All men are not born with the same dispositions. Some natures are hard and feel great difficulty and contradiction of the flesh against works of virtue; they are thereby much afflicted and think all is lost. It is to such as these to whom I address the first advice I have to give, which is to let them know that there is no sin or imperfection in these repugnances and movements against reason, but only in following and acting upon them. Involuntary motions, bad thoughts occurring against purity, against faith, or against any other virtue whatsoever, for which many afflict themselves very much, are not sins. Wherefore the saints bid us not to put ourselves at all in pain for them; it is not the feeling these impressions but the consenting to them which makes the sin. When you loathe these temptations and endeavor to resist them, and do not entertain them or take satisfaction in them, they are no sin, but on the contrary an occasion of greater merit.

So of inclinations and evil emotions that we have of our nature, some more, others less, from which arise such evil stirrings in our appetite and such repugnances and reluctances for virtue—it is not in this point that one is good or evil, perfect or imperfect, for the thing is natural and not in our own control; it is the inheritance of sin. St. Paul, though he was St. Paul, felt the contradiction and rebellion of his flesh, and said: *I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and leading me cap-*

*tive in the law of sin that is in my members* (Rom. vii. 23). St. Augustine explains to this effect the verse of the psalm, *Be ye angry, and sin not* (Psalm iv. 6). "That is, though there arise in your heart some first motion, which now, being part of the penalty of sin, is not in our power, at least let not the will consent to it, but *in mind let us serve the law of God, though yet in flesh we serve the law of sin* (Rom. vii. 25). Though there arise in your appetite the movement of impatience and anger, do not let yourself be carried away or consent to it, and you shall not sin." Those cows that drew the Ark of the Covenant bellowed as they went along because they had taken their calves from them, which they naturally loved; yet for all that they failed not to go straight on their way without turning either to the right or to the left. Do you the same. Persist in the straight way of virtue without permitting yourself to be put out of your way by the bellowing of flesh and blood, and herein you may be perfect.

The difference that there is between spiritual persons who labor after perfection and carnal and sensual persons who think not at all of it, does not consist in feeling or not feeling these motions and contradictions of their flesh, but in the fact that the one let themselves be carried away by them, the others do not. The live fish goes upstream and the dead fish downstream; so to know whether you are spiritually alive or dead, see whether you work upstream, whether you go against the current of your passions, or whether you let yourself be carried away by them downstream. The spiritual man hears not the cries and barkings of gluttony and the sensual appetite, nor lets himself be carried away thereby. *He hearkeneth not to the voice of the exactor*, says Job (xxxix. 7). Job calls the stomach *the exactor*, because it cries for more than is necessary. This is the whole point, says St. Gregory, not to hearken or consent to cravings that arise. Far from being discouraged by these evil inclinations, we should animate ourselves to



make them the occasion of our gaining a greater crown from these as from other temptations. So St. Augustine, preaching on the Ascension and exhorting us all to mount up to heaven with Christ, assigns as other means to do that our passions and evil inclinations. And if asked how passions can help one to ascend into heaven, he answered that it was by the individual's making generous efforts to subject them and get them under. In this way we shall make of our passions steps to mount on high; they will be below us to lift us up; they will be put under our feet to serve as steps to climb up to heaven.

We read in the Life of our holy Father that, being naturally hot-tempered, he had so overcome and changed his nature by the help and assistance of grace that they thought him to be of a phlegmatic temperament. Plutarch relates of Socrates that there came to see him a physiognomist, who could tell the natural inclinations of anyone from his outward mien and countenance, and pronounced that this man was evilly inclined to lewdness, gluttony, drunkenness, and many other vices. The disciples and friends of Socrates fell into a great rage and were ready to lay hands on the man, but Socrates restrained them, saying: "The man is in the right, for I should be such a one as he makes me out were I not given to philosophy and the practice of virtue." But if a philosopher who had only the assistance of the light of nature was able after such a manner to overcome his bad inclinations, what may not a Christian or a religious man be able to do by the help of divine grace, as grace is more powerful than nature?

There are another sort of persons who are naturally well inclined. *There has fallen to their portion a good soul* (Wisdom viii. 9), as though they had not sinned in Adam, as used to be said of St. Bonaventure by his master, Alexander of Hales. Their disposition is so good and sweet that every duty that meets them seems to be already done to their hand; they feel not in their flesh those contradictions

and repugnances which others feel, but on the contrary they say: "Talk to me of the difficulties of religious life? Why, I find none!" It is to these to whom the second admonition appertains, which they must make use of to undeceive themselves. If God has given you such a happy constitution and good nature that you do not feel these difficulties and hardly know what a troublesome temptation is, be not puffed up or vain on that account, since this is not any virtue that you have gained, but the natural temperament with which you were born. Now virtue and spiritual progress are not measured by the cast of countenance nor exterior comportment, nor by gentleness of disposition, but by individual effort and by victory gained over self. This is the certain and sure measure of each one's spiritual progress. And therefore one who is naturally hot-tempered does more when he resists and overcomes this passion of anger than you who find everything done for you. Plutarch praises Alexander the Great above all the monarchs of earth, saying that others were born to monarchy, but he gained monarchy with his right arm and spear and with many wounds received in divers battles. Such as have rendered themselves masters over their passions at the point of the sword, if I may say so, are more worthy of praise than those who are born with sweet and peaceable tempers and never have any provocation to fight at all. Wherefore neither the sweetness of your humor nor the natural heat and impetuosity of another, ought to make you esteem yourself the more or him the less; but on the contrary you must thereby take more occasion to humble yourself, acknowledging that what appears to be virtue in you is not so, but a pure effect of your natural temperament; whereas, in the case of your neighbor, everything that he does is virtue. You have made no progress because you have overcome yourself in nothing; while your neighbor has made great progress because he has withstood himself and overcome himself in many things. The fact of his encountering harder opposition and

having a more rebellious nature to overcome, makes him take more care of himself and live with greater caution and fervor, and thus he grows continually in virtue. But to you your good natural endowment is an occasion of negligence and continual tepidity; and as you meet no enemies on your path, you become loutish and lazy.

It will be well also herein to consider what you would have been if God had given you a strong and difficult nature as He has given to that other, and to believe that the faults you would have committed would have been more numerous and greater than his. If with such a good natural disposition and so excellent an endowment you commit so many faults and are so tepid and remiss, what would have happened if you had encountered the strong oppositions and contradictions that he has had to meet? When God does not permit temptations to come upon you, we say you ought to think it is because of your weakness and your not having virtue enough to stand so much. So, too, you should make up your mind that it was a particular providence and mercy of the Lord to give you that good natural disposition and good endowment, because you would not have had virtue enough to overcome that strong and violent nature which your neighbor has. Thus you will preserve in yourself humility on the one hand, and on the other a good opinion of your brother.

The third admonition is for the undeceiving of a third class of persons, who feel not within themselves these repugnances and contradictions nor this rebellion of the flesh, but reckon themselves to be at peace, not because they are mortified, nor again because they have a good natural disposition and an excellent constitution like the former, but because they make no effort to restrain themselves, to deny and overcome themselves, but their delight is to gratify their desire and inclination, and on this line of action they feel not those repugnances and contradictions. They fancy they have peace, *saying peace, peace, and it is*

*no peace* (Jerem. vi. 4), but a false and fictitious tranquillity. On that text of St. Paul (Rom. vii. 23) : *I feel another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind, and leading me captive by the law of sin*, the glorious Augustine observes: "This war and contradiction of the flesh against the spirit and of the spirit against the flesh is experienced by those who are endeavoring to acquire virtue and root out vices from themselves." So we see that worldly persons do not understand this talk of mortification, for it is their practice to follow their own will in all its caprices, taking that for their rule and their law. They do not know what it is to say no to themselves and to restrain their cravings, and so they experience no war nor contradiction within themselves, because there is nothing there to stand in the way of what they are bent upon. But those who aim at a spiritual life, and labor to acquire true virtues and root out their vices and bad inclinations, feel at once this war and contradiction of the flesh. As the bird does not know that it is caught till it tries to get out of the net, so man does not know the strength of his vices and evil inclinations till he labors to rid himself of them. In the embracing of virtue the contradiction of the contrary vice declares itself.

We read in the acts of the holy Fathers that one day a monk proposed this question to one of the old Fathers: "How comes it to pass that I feel not within myself those combats and that stress of temptation that others suffer?" To whom the holy man made this answer: "It is because you are like a great gate, by which he comes in who will and he goes out who will, without your knowing what is done and what goes on in the house. You keep a very lax conscience, little guard over your heart, little circumspection in your doings, little recollection in your senses, so do not wonder at what you ask me. But if you would keep the gate of your heart shut, if you hindered bad thoughts from entering, you would then see what a war they would



make on you to get in." If, therefore, you feel not this war within yourself nor any of these combats of your flesh, take heed lest this does not happen simply because you take your own way in all things, and use no endeavor to contradict your appetites and root out your vices and bad inclinations.

## CHAPTER XVIII

*That It Is Always Necessary to Exercise Ourselves in  
Mortification, How Good and Advanced Soever We  
May Be in Virtue*

ST. BERNARD says that we must always carry the pruning-hook of mortification in our hands, pruning and mortifying, and that there is no person who stands not in need of pruning or retrenching something or other, how much soever he be mortified and think himself advanced. "Believe me," says he, "that which is cut, sprouts anew; that which is driven out, returns; that which is quenched, flares up again; and that which is lulled to sleep, wakes up once more. It is not sufficient, therefore," adds the saint, "to have pruned once; we must use the knife often, and even always, if possible; for if you will not deceive yourself, you will always find something to cut and to retrench within yourself." The hedges which we see in certain gardens furnish us with a very fit comparison for this subject. The myrtle and the box are artistically cut here into the figure of a lion, there into that of an eagle, and there into a man on horseback. But if the gardener did not go always cutting and pruning the shoots that keep growing, in a few days there would be no lion left, nor eagle either, nor man on horseback, because the shrub goes on growing according to its nature and is naturally ever sprouting afresh. So here, though you be a lion or an eagle, though you fancy that you are very strong and master of yourself, if you do not go always pruning, retrenching, and

mortifying, you will soon be neither lion nor eagle, but a monster, because we have here within us a root of contrariety that is ever sprouting and growing according to its own nature, so that there will always be something to mortify. "However much progress you have made, you deceive yourself in thinking that your vices are dead whereas they are only held in check. Whether you will or no, you have within you the Jebusite. The enemy is always with you; you may check and keep him down, but you cannot finally cast him out"—*Quantumlibet in hoc corpore manens profeceris, erras si vitia putas emortua, et non magis suppressa. Velis, nolis, intra fines tuos habitat Iebusaeus, subjugari potest, sed non exterminari* (St. Bernard). St. Paul says: *I know that there dwelleth not in my flesh any good.* This would be saying little, says St. Bernard, if he did not add: *For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, I do; and yet it is not I who do it, but the sin that dwelleth in me* (Rom. vii. 18-19). Either, then, prefer yourself to the Apostle, says St. Bernard, or you must confess that there dwells in you a vicious and evil inclination and that you have ever something to mortify.

The holy Abbot Ephrem in confirmation of this says: "The war of soldiers is soon over, but a monk's fight lasts until he passes away to the Lord"—*Bellum militum breve, sed monachi pugna quoadusque ad Dominum migret.* There is much more to do in mortifying and checking our affections and passions than in cutting the hardest stones. For besides the fact that the stone offers the workman no such resistance or contradiction as is found in ourselves, it never returns again to its primitive roughness once it has been cut; but our affections and passions change very frequently and are apt to revive and reawaken, and it is necessary to return to the task of repressing them time after time. St. Jerome on that text of the prophet, *Sing ye to the Lord on the harp* (Psalm xcvi. 5), says that, as a harp makes no good music nor harmony till all the strings are in tune, and

one single string broken or not in accord with the rest makes a discord, so one single passion in us, discordant and unmortified, will prevent our soul from making good music in the ears of God. *Sing to tune on a harp of ten strings* (Psalm xxxii. 2). But to bring this well about, it is clear how necessary it is to keep up this exercise.

On this account those ancient Fathers, as St. John Climacus relates, proved and exercised in many sorts of mortifications and humiliations even the most perfect among their number. And they gave a good reason for this, because it often happens that those who seem very perfect and great endurers of hardship, if their superiors cease to prove and exercise them, regarding them as men of consummate virtue, come in time to lose or abate that modesty and endurance which they had. For however good land may be, rich and fertile, yet if left uncultivated and unwatered it is apt to go wild and barren and yield a crop of thorns and thistles; so let a soul be ever so advanced in perfection, yet if it is left without the watering and the labor of mortification and the practice of endurance, it will become a wild and barren soil and will produce thorns of evil and impure thoughts and a false and deceitful sense of security. Thus we all stand in need of mortification: not only such as have any bad and corrupt inclinations, but even those whose inclinations are very good; not only the perfect and beginners, but also the most ancient and perfect; not only those who have sinned, but those who have preserved their baptismal innocence; some to gain virtue, some to keep it. He who rides a horse, however good and gentle it be, always takes bridle and spur, because, after all, it is but a horse.

*If anyone will come after me, says our Savior, let him deny himself and take up his cross* (Matt. xvi. 24). St. Luke adds, *Take up his cross daily* (Luke ix. 23). You ought to let no day pass without curbing your own will in something. Any day that you let pass without doing this, says St. John Climacus, count it for a great default; reckon

that you have lost that day and that you have not been a religious that day. *Amici, perdidimus diem*—"Friends, we have lost a day," said the Roman emperor [Titus]; we have not been kings or emperors, for we have bestowed no favor on anyone. But it is much more proper for a religious man to mortify himself and deny his own will than for kings and emperors to bestow favors, for this it is to be a religious, to do what you do not want to do and leave undone what you do want to do.

Our Father Francis Borgia has left us a good example in this as in all other things. He used to say that without doubt his meat would be bitter and disagreeable to him any day that he did not chastise his body with some good penance or mortification; and he added that it would be a grief to him throughout life if he knew that death would surprise him on a day on which he had not done some penance and mortified his senses. Thus he let no day pass on which he did not mortify himself; and he prayed and besought the Lord to do him this favor, that comforts should be to him a torment and a cross, and afflictions a comfort, which is the third and highest degree of mortification; and he used to say that he should have no comfort until he had obtained this of our Lord. He lived in perpetual watchfulness, making war on his body, and was always finding something wherein to mortify and maltreat it. All the things that enabled him to afflict it he called his friends. If the sun distressed him on a journey, he would say: "Oh, what good assistance our friend renders us!" He said the same of the frost and wind and rain in the rigor of winter, and of the pain of the gout and attacks of the heart and of those who persecuted and said evil things of him; all these he called friends because they helped him to vanquish and subdue his body, which he held for his deadly enemy. And not content with the mortifications and afflictions that came in his way, he went seeking new contrivances to mortify himself. Sometimes he put sand and pebbles in his shoes to hurt his



feet when walking. In summer he hung about in the sun, and in winter in the snow and ice. He laid his temples bare with pulling out the hairs. When he could not take the discipline, he tormented his flesh with pinches and other artifices. Even in sicknesses he sought means to add aches to aches and pains to pains. His purgative draughts, however bitter they were, he sipped as though they were a plate of nourishing soup. He chewed bitter pills, and broke them up between his teeth, and kept them in his mouth a long time. In this way did he mortify and torment his senses and crucify his flesh, and so he came to arrive at the perfection of sanctity at which he did arrive.

## CHAPTER XIX

### *Of Two Means That Will Make the Practice of Mortification Easy and Sweet, Which Are the Grace of God and His Holy Love*

**I**T remains to treat of some means to aid us in this practice of mortification, so necessary for us, means that will make it not only easy and bearable but sweet and pleasant. The first and chiefest means to this must be the grace of the Lord, whereby everything is made easy and light. The Apostle Paul was much vexed by a temptation and earnestly besought God to take it away. The Lord answered him: *My grace is enough for thee* (II Cor. xii. 9). By the grace of God he felt himself so strengthened as to say: *I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me* (Phil. iv. 13). *Not I, but the grace of God with me* (I Cor. xv. 10). The Lord does not leave us alone in this labor of mortification; He aids us to carry the burden. And on this account He calls His law a *yoke*, because two bear it. Christ conjoins Himself with us to bear it, and who will be frightened in such company and with such support? Let it not seem to you difficult, because the lesser half of it falls on

you. For this reason He says that, though it is a yoke, it is *sweet*; and though it is a burden, it is *light* (Matt. xi. 30). For though, considering our nature and the smallness of our strength, it is heavy, and that is what is denoted by the name of yoke and burden, yet by the grace of God it is easy and sweet because the Lord Himself lightens it to us, as He promises by the Prophet Osee: *I will be as one who lighteneth the yoke and removeth the halter from their jaws* (Osee xi. 4). And by Isaias He says: *The yoke shall rot for the power of the oil* (x. 27). Mortification seems a heavy yoke and burden, but so great is the favor and grace of God, signified by the oil, that the yoke will rot and become soft till you find it no longer irksome, nor even feel it.

St. Bernard in his First Sermon on the Consecration of a Church says: "As in the consecration of a church this ceremony is observed of anointing the crosses on the walls with holy oil, so does our Lord with the souls of religious. By the spiritual unction of His grace He anoints and softens for them the crosses of penance and mortification. Many shun this holy exercise because they see the cross and not the unction. But you who have experienced it (he says to his religious) know right well that our cross is an anointed cross, and with this unction not only is it light and easy, but what appears to men in the world bitter and disagreeable becomes to us by the grace of God very sweet and pleasant to taste"—*Ecce vero scitis quia crux nostra inuncta est, sed, ut ita dicam, amaritudo nostra dulcissima*. So St. Augustine says that he had not understood this language of chastity; he thought there was no man in the world who observed it until he came to understand the power of grace, whereby we can well say what St. John said: *And his commandments are not heavy* (I John v. 3). The commandments of God and of the Gospel are not heavy and difficult, for the abundance of grace that the Lord gives to enable us to do what He commands makes them easy and

sweet. St. Gregory on that saying of Isaias: *They that hope in the Lord shall change their strength* (xl. 31), marks two sorts of strength—one of the just to suffer and mortify themselves much for God, the other of the wicked to suffer great labors for the world, for honor and wealth, and the gratification of their appetites and desires; and he says that those who trust in the grace of the Lord shall change this strength into that of the just.

The second thing that will render to us the practice of mortification sweet and easy is the love of God. There is nothing more efficacious, nothing that renders any labor more sweet and easy, than love. St. Augustine says: "He that loves labors not"—*Qui amat non laborat*. The labors of those who love are not burdens, but rather pleasures, as with sportsmen who fish, beat woods for game, and hunt. That labor is no burden to them; rather they take it for recreation, for the love and affection they have for it. What makes the mother not feel the continual labors she has in rearing her child but love? What makes the wife tend night and day her sick husband but love? What makes birds and beasts so solicitous for the rearing of their offspring, so as to be ready to fast that they may eat and labor that they may rest and defend them with so great courage, but love? What made the labors of seven, and then of fourteen, years in sun and frost seem light to Jacob for the winning of Rachel but love? *They seemed to him but a few days for the excess of his great love* (Gen. xxix. 20). On that saying of the spouse: *My beloved is a little bundle of myrrh to me* (Cant. i. 12); the glorious St. Bernard says: "She does not say, *my beloved is a bundle of myrrh*, but *a little bundle*, because all labor seems slight and light to her for the great love she bears her Beloved. Note also that she does not say absolutely, *my beloved is a little bundle of myrrh*, but with the addition, *to me*. To him who loves, the beloved becomes *a little bundle*. If He is to you a great and heavy bundle, it is because you love not, it is

for want of love; so take that for a sign whether you have great or little love for God. It is not that the labors of virtue are great, but that our love is small, and therefore they become to us great. Love much, and not only will you not feel labor, but relish it; where there is love, there is no labor, but relish only.

A holy woman used to say that from the time that she had been called and wounded by the love of God, she had never more known what it was to suffer either within or without, either from the world or from the devil or from the flesh or from anything else, because pure love knows not what manner of thing pain and torment is. Thus love, besides surpassing all works of high degree and adding great perfection to them, gives at the same time great courage and fortitude to face any labor and mortification and makes everything easy, light, and savory. So St. Chrysostom explains the saying of the Apostle: *Love is the fulfillment of the law* (Rom. xiii. 10), as meaning not only that all the law and all the commandments are contained in this short word *love*, but also that this love makes the observance of all the law and all the commandments of God very easy.

This is well confirmed by the saying of the Wise Man: *Love is strong as death* (Cant. viii. 6). Among other explanations of these words the saints give two that make for our purpose. St. Gregory gives one that St. Augustine takes to be the better. Do you know, he says, the meaning of that saying, that love is strong as death? It means that, as death separates the soul from the body, so the love of God separates the soul from corporal and sensible things; and as death separates man from all commerce with the things of the world, so the love of God, when it takes possession of our spirit, strengthens it so as to remove it from commerce and conversation with the world and from the affection that it bears to the flesh and to all sensible things. This is the meaning of love's being as strong as death; for



as death kills the body, so the love of God kills and deadens in us affection to all corporal and sensible things; it makes a man die to the world and to all self-love and live to Christ our Lord alone, so as to be able to say with St. Paul: *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. ii. 20).

Another excellent explanation is given by St. Augustine in these words: *Rest in his strength*. He says that the love of God is strong as death because death, when it comes, is irresistible; no medicine, no treatment avails against it; it boots not to be bishop, king, pope, or emperor; death lays all that low, nothing can stand before it, nothing of all the things there are on earth can turn it away, neither honors, nor riches, nor prosperity, nor adversity. Else let everyone see this for himself from the favor that the Lord has done him. With one little spark of His love that He gave you, nothing could stand in your way to make you quit the path of perfection and religious life which you took, neither parents, nor relations, nor all that there was in the world; but you spurned all that and made light of it in comparison with what you now enjoy. Let us, then, conceive a great love of God, and nothing will stand in our way, but rather we shall say with the Apostle: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? Sure I am that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor strength, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God* (Rom. viii. 35).

## CHAPTER XX

*Of Another Motive That Will Facilitate and Make Agreeable the Practice of Mortification, Namely, the Hope of Reward*

THE motive that will render this practice of mortification easy and sweet is the greatness of the reward that we hope for. With this hope holy Job animated and consoled himself in the midst of his very great afflictions, saying: *Who will grant me that the words which I would fain utter may be written, to remain for a perpetual memorial to posterity! And for greater perpetuity he goes on to wish: Who will grant that they may be imprinted in a book, or with a punch or burin of iron may be engraved on a plate of lead, or with a graving tool may be sculptured and hollowed out on a flagstone!* But why dost thou wish, holy Job, for such perpetuity to thy words? That all men, born and to be born, may have in their afflictions the comfort that I have in mine. And what are those words? *I know by revelation of my God that my Redeemer liveth—he speaks of the Son of God and of the future as if it were past or present for the great certitude that he has of it—and since He is risen and living, I know that in the last day of the world I also am to rise again from the earth and dust into which I shall have been turned, and once more I am to be girt about with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see God, Who is the reward of them that serve Him, whom I myself and mine eyes are to see and rejoice in, and none other—I, the same that now am suffering, am to rise again and rejoice in God—I keep this hope safe laid up in my breast* (Job xix. 25), and from thence as from a treasure I draw relief and rich comfort in my afflictions.

With this consideration God encouraged Abraham. For when he said: “Lord, I have left my country and my kindred, for so Thou commandedst me; what reward hast

Thou to give me?" God answered him: *I am thy recompense, and thy reward exceeding great* (Gen. xv. 1). With this consideration St. Paul says that Moses encouraged himself to abandon honor and choose a mean estate. *Moses, when he was grown up in faith and hope, reckoned nothing of being the son of the daughter of Pharaoh, who had adopted him for her child. All that he despised, and chose rather to be humbled and persecuted for love of God than all the riches and treasures of Egypt, for he had an eye to the recompense and reward that he hoped for* (Heb. xi. 24). With this consideration the Prophet David encouraged himself to fulfil the law and commandments of God, when he said: *I have inclined mine heart forever to keep thy commandments for the sake of the reward* (Psalm cxviii. 112).

St. Augustine says: "Heavy work it is to keep at it, continually mortifying and curbing our will; but look at the prize and reward to be given you for it and you will see that it is all very little in comparison: hope of reward lightens the stress of toil." So he says we see here in the labors of merchants, agriculturists, and soldiers. Now if the fury and force of the sea and its fearful waves do not dismay mariners and traders; nor rains and storms, field laborers; nor wounds and deaths, soldiers; nor blows and falls, wrestlers, when they set their eyes on the human hopes which they expect to realize by their labors, how shall one who looks for the kingdom of heaven quail before the labor and mortification that virtue requires? *And they indeed for a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable* (I Cor. ix. 25), says the Apostle St. Paul. If they for a perishable prize and reward, a thing of such short duration, expose themselves to such labors, what is it reasonable for us to do for a prize and reward so great, a prize that shall last for ever and ever! Why, what we do is nothing in comparison with what we hope to get for it; it is nothing that they ask of us in comparison with what they give—they give it away to us for nothing. You cannot tell

whether a thing is dear or cheap by the price they ask you for it, without looking at the same time at the thing that is sold. Else I ask you, are a hundred ducats much to give for a thing? According as the thing is, it may be such that it would be dear at fifty farthings, or such that it would be given away for nothing if sold at a thousand ducats. If it is a very rich, precious stone, or if they give you a city for a thousand ducats, it is given away for nothing. Thus, if you wish to see whether what God asks is much or little, look at your purchase, look at the recompense which they give you for it. *I am thy reward* (Gen. xv. 1). They reward you to the point of giving you God. Is that what they give me? Then they give it me gratis; they ask nothing for it in asking me to deny my own will and mortify myself; they give it me for a mere nothing. *Ye that have no money, make haste, buy and eat. Come, buy without money, and without exchange wine and milk* (Isaias lv. 1).

This means is also greatly recommended to us by St. Basil. "Ever remember the great glory and reward that you hope for, thereby to encourage yourself to labor and to virtue." The blessed St. Anthony Abbot thereby encouraged his disciples to persevere in the continued rigor of religious life. In admiration of the great liberality of God he would stop and say: "In this life the dealings and contracts of men are equal on both sides; one gives as much as he receives; what is sold is worth the price paid for it. But the promise of life and glory everlasting is bought at a very low price, since it is written: *The life of man is commonly some seventy years, or at most, with care and coddling, one attains to eighty, and what passes beyond that is pain, affliction and infirmity* (Psalm lxxxix. 10). But when we have lived eighty years, or a hundred or more, serving God, they will not give us for that the same number of years over again of glory; but for those years they will give us to reign forever in glory so long as God shall be God for all ages of ages (Exod. xv. 18). Wherefore, my



children (the saint goes on), be not affrighted, nor set before your eyes the hardship of this life, for all that we can suffer in this life is inconsiderable in view of the reward and recompense that we hope for (Rom. viii. 18).” For the labor of a moment they give us a weight of glory to last for ever and ever (II Cor. iv. 17). St. Bernard brings a very good comparison to bear on this point. There is no sower so silly as to think the sowing season long, though he spend many days in sowing; for he knows that the longer the sowing time lasts, the greater will be the crop. In the same manner, he says, the labor of this life should not appear to us great or very lengthy, for it is a sowing time, and the more we sow and labor, the more abundantly and plentifully shall we reap. And the saint adds: “Consider how from a little more seed sown there comes afterwards a great increase and multiplication.” When the husbandman sees at harvest time how a handful of wheat sowed has brought in twenty or thirty fold, he will wish that he had sown a great deal more.

## CHAPTER XXI

### *What Has Been Said in the Preceding Chapter Is Confirmed by Some Examples*

IT is told of one of those ancient Fathers that he labored much, and did great penances and mortifications. His companions and disciples bade him desist, and moderate those afflictions and mortifications, being as they were so great. He replied: “Believe me, my sons, if the place and state of the blessed in heaven were capable of pain and grief, they would be very much distressed at not having suffered in this life greater afflictions and mortifications, seeing the great reward and recompense given for them and how they might have gained so much glory at so small a cost.” This agrees with what St. Bonaventure says: “The

amount of glory that we miss every hour that we spend in idleness is exactly in proportion to the good works that we might have done in that time."

Something similar is related of the holy virgin Mechtildis. She was very frequently visited by Christ our Redeemer, her Spouse, to Whom she had dedicated herself entirely, knowing of Him many marvelous things. One day she heard the saints exclaiming: "Oh, how fortunate and blessed you are, you who still live on earth, for the amount of merit that you may gain! If a man only knew how much he might merit every day from the first moment of his rising, his heart would be filled at once with joy and satisfaction to think that that day had dawned on which he might live to God our Lord, and with His grace, to the honor and glory of the same God, might increase his merit; and this would give him courage and strength to do and suffer all things with the utmost cheerfulness."

In the "Spiritual Meadow," which was composed by John Eiviratus, or according to others by St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and was approved in the Second Council of Nice, there is a story of a monk who had a cell at a great distance from water, about twelve miles; and one day that he went for water he fainted on the way from overfatigue. Seeing himself, then, so worn out, he said within himself: "Why need I take all this trouble? I have a mind to go and live near the water and fix my cell there." Another time, coming for water with his pitcher, he planned as he went along where his cell might conveniently be, and how he would build it, and the life that he would lead in it. Hereupon he heard on his track the voice of a man, saying, "One, two, three, etc." He turned his head, wondering how in that lonely place there should be anyone to measure and reason distance or anything else. He saw nobody, and once more went on with his journey, thinking over his plans. Once more he heard the same voice saying, "One, two, three." A second time he turned his head, and saw nobody

either. The same thing happened a third time and, turning his head, he saw a handsome smiling youth, who said to him: "Do not trouble yourself; I am an angel of God, and I come counting the steps that you take on this journey, for not one of them shall go unrewarded," and so saying, he disappeared. The monk, seeing that, reflected within himself and said: "How can I be so wanting in judgment as to choose the loss of such great good and such a gain?" He determined forthwith to change his cell, putting it even farther off from where he had it, so to have more labor and fatigue.

There is a story in the lives of the Fathers of an old monk who lived in the Thebaid, who had a disciple whom he had trained well. It was the old man's custom every night to give him an exhortation and after that to have prayers, and so he sent him to bed. It happened one day that some secular persons came to visit the monk, moved by the fame of his great abstinence; and after having dismissed them, it being already late, he set himself to give his exhortation as usual, and it was so long that sleep came over him and he dropped off, that holy old man. The disciple waited for him to awake that they might say prayers, and he get his dismissal. But as he did not awake, thoughts of impatience began to worry him, pressing him to be off to bed. He resisted once; then other and other thoughts assailed him till seven times, all of which he resisted manfully. It was now midnight, and the holy old man awoke; and finding him seated where he had left him when the discourse began, he said: "Son, why did you not wake me?" He answered that it was not to give him annoyance. They recited their matins; and when they had finished, he gave him his blessing and sent him off to sleep. The old man, putting himself in prayer, was rapt in spirit, and an angel showed him a very beautiful and glorious lodging, and shining in it a chair, and on the seat seven very rich crowns. The old man asked: "Whom are those crowns for?" The

angel answered: "For your disciple; and the lodging and seat the Lord has given him for the life he leads, and those crowns he merited last night." The morning came, and the monk asked the disciple how he passed the night while watching him asleep. And the good disciple related all that had passed, and how he had resisted seven times over the thoughts of giving up his watching. Hence the old man understood that it was by this that he had won those seven crowns.

It is told of the blessed St. Francis that one day in mid-winter his brother according to the flesh met him in rags and tatters, half-naked, perishing and trembling with cold, and later sent to ask him in mockery and scorn if he would sell him one drop of his sweat. The saint answered with a meek spirit: "Tell my brother that I have already sold it all to my God and Lord, and that at a high price." Another time, some years afterwards, when he was harassed with very severe and continual pains and, besides, with new and troublesome temptations of the devil, insomuch that it seemed as though no human strength could withstand them, he heard a voice from heaven bidding him rejoice and be glad, for that for those evils and tribulations he was to earn in heaven a treasure so great that, though the whole earth were turned into gold and all its stones into pearls, pearls most precious, and all its waters into balsam, that would bear no comparison with the reward and recompense that they would give him on that account. This message relieved and lightened the saint so much that he no longer felt his pains; and having on the spot called together his religious, he recounted to them with great joy the comfort that God had sent him from heaven.



## CHAPTER XXII

*Of Another Motive That Will Help Us, and Render the Practice of Mortification Easy, Which Is the Example of Christ Our Redeemer*

THE fourth motive that will greatly encourage and help us in this practice of mortification is the example of Christ our Redeemer and Master. So the Apostle St. Paul puts it before our eyes to encourage us thereto. *Armed with patience, let us run to the conflict that awaits us, looking at Jesus Christ, Author and Fulfiller of faith, who, putting before His eyes the joy of our redemption, endured the Cross, and made no account of the shame and humiliation of the world. Think once and again of Him Who suffered so much contradiction of sinners against Himself, that ye be not worn out, your hearts failing you: for ye have not resisted and struggled against sin even to the shedding of blood* (Heb. xii. 1-4), as He shed His for you. Holy Scripture relates that, when the children of Israel were passing through the desert and came upon those waters of Mara that were so bitter that they could not drink them (Exod. xv. 23), Moses made prayer to God, and He showed him a kind of wood which, cast upon the waters, rendered them sweet and palatable. The saints say that by this wood is signified the wood of the Cross. When the labor of mortification becomes bitter and grievous to you, cast upon it this sacred wood; think of the Cross and Passion of Christ, His scourges and thorns, the gall and vinegar that they gave Him for His refreshment; and at once it will become sweet and palatable to you.

In the chronicles of the Order of St. Francis we read how a very rich man, reared in honor and comforts, entered the order; and as soon as the tempter saw his change of life, he assailed him with representations of the austerity of the order; how instead of the delicacies, good clothes, and

soft bed that he was used to, he found beans, a coarse tunic, straw for bedding, strict poverty instead of riches. He felt it much; and as the devil put before him the hardness of these things, he pressed him sore with instigations how he should leave them and return to the world. The temptation came to be so unbearable that the man determined to leave his order. In this resolve he passed through the chapter room, and falling on his knees before the figure of our crucified Lord he commended himself to His mercy. So being transported out of himself, he was caught up in spirit and there appeared to him our Lord and His glorious Mother, and they asked him why he was going. With great reverence he replied: "Lord, I was reared in the world in much comfort, and I cannot stand the austerity of this religious order, especially in food and dress." The Lord raised His right arm and showed him the wound in His side, running with blood, and said to him: "Stretch out your arm, and put your hand here, and bathe it in the blood of My side; and when there comes into your mind any rigor or austerity, moisten it with this blood, and everything, difficult though it be, will become easy and sweet." The novice did what the Lord told him, and for every temptation that occurred to him he called to mind the Passion of Christ, and at once everything was changed into great sweetness and delight. What hardship can appear hard to a vile man and wretched worm, seeing a God crowned with thorns and nailed to a Cross for his love! What will he not suffer and endure for his sins when he sees the Lord of Majesty suffering so much for the sins of others!

The saints made much use of this motive of the example of Christ our Redeemer and the desire to imitate Him because, besides being a very efficacious motive to animate us to mortification and suffering, it is likewise a motive of high perfection, making our actions many degrees more excellent, as springing from the love of God. And so we read of our blessed Father Ignatius that at the beginning of

his conversion he practised great mortifications and penances, having regard to his sins, and to make satisfaction for them; but afterwards, as he grew more advanced, he afflicted his body with austerities and chastisements, not so much in regard of his sins as of the example of Christ and His saints. The saints saw that Christ our Lord had gone that way and had embraced afflictions and the Cross with such love and desire, longing already to see the hour in which He was to give His lifeblood for us (Luke xii. 50). And as elephants put forth their strength in battle at the sight of blood, so they came hereby to have a great thirst of suffering martyrdom and shedding their blood for Him Who had first shed His for them. And as this desire met not with its accomplishment, they practised cruelties upon themselves and made themselves their own executioners, and martyred their bodies, afflicting them with penances and labors, and mortified and curbed their wills and appetites; and in this way they found some little relief was made as their desire was in some sort fulfilled of imitating as far as they could Christ our Redeemer. This is what the Apostle St. Paul says: "Let us go on ever mortifying and maltreating, *bearing ever stamped upon ourselves the mortification of Jesus Christ, that the life of Jesus Christ may be shown forth in our bodies* (II Cor. iv. 10). The treatment and mortification of our body should be such as to represent the life of Jesus Christ and resemble it. St. Bernard says: *Non decet sub capite spinoso membrum esse delicatum*—"It is not fitting, nor looks well, that, the head being full of thorns, the members should be dainty and comfortable, but be mortified and crucified in the flesh to be in conformity with their head."

Many are the other motives that we might bring for this, since all that the saints give and all the reasons they allege to exhort us to do penance may serve to animate us to this practice of mortification.

On those words of the Apostle: *The sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us* (Rom. viii. 18), the glorious St. Bernard says: "The sufferings and tribulations of this world do not equal, and are as nothing in comparison with, the glory that we hope for, with the punishment that we fear, with the sins that we have committed, or with the benefits that we have received of God." Any of these points, well considered, is enough to animate us to this practice.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### *Of Three Degrees of Mortification*

TO conclude and finish off this treatise, we will briefly set forth the three degrees of mortification which St. Bernard assigns. The first is that which the Apostle St. Peter teaches us in his first canonical epistle. *Brethren, I ask you to live as strangers and pilgrims on earth, and as such to refrain the desires and appetites of the flesh, which war against the spirit* (I Pet. ii. 11). We are all pilgrims in this world on our way to our heavenly country, as St. Paul says: *We have not here a lasting city, but we go seeking for one to come* (Heb. xiii. 14), *for while we are in the body we are away from the Lord* (II Cor. v. 6). Let us, then, make ourselves pilgrims and wayfarers. The wayfarer, says St. Bernard, goes straight ahead on his way, taking care to avoid all the circuitous routes that he can. If he sees on the route people laughing, or keeping festivals, weddings, and merry-makings, he pays no attention to it, nor cares about it, but goes straight on his way, because he is a wayfarer and those things do not concern him. All his anxiety and occupation is to sigh after his native place and take care to approach and arrive there. He is content with a light dress and with a meal enough to keep him going on his journey; he has no mind to go



laden with unnecessary baggage, but to go light that he travel better.

This is the way, then, we ought to try to behave on our pilgrimage. We should use the things of this world just by the way, in view of the end before us, like pilgrims and wayfarers as we are, not taking more than is necessary to enable us to go on our way. *Having food and wherewith to be clothed, with these let us be content*, as St. Paul says (I Tim. vi. 8). Let us eschew and rid ourselves of all that is not necessary, that thus we may travel the better for traveling light. Let us sigh after our country and be sensible of our exile. Happy and blessed is he, says St. Bernard, who behaves and conducts himself like a pilgrim upon earth, and knows and bewails his exile, saying with the prophet: *Hear, O Lord, my sighs, my tears and groans, for I am a stranger and pilgrim on earth, as were my fathers and forebears* (Psalm xxxviii. 13).

This degree is a very high one, and we shall do not a little if we get to that. But the saint tells us there is another, higher and of greater perfection. For the pilgrim, though he does not join in with the neighbors and townsfolk, sometimes is pleased to see and hear what passes on the road and to relate it to others; and with these trifles, although he does not altogether lose his way, nevertheless he is kept back and arrives later; and even he may be so amused and kept back by these things as not only to be made to reach his home later, but even never to reach it at all. But who is more of a stranger and more free and detached from the things of this world than the pilgrim? Do you know? He who is dead. For the pilgrim, though it be only to ask and seek what is necessary for his journey and go laden with it, may be occupied and kept back more than would be desirable; but the dead man, though he has to go unburied, feels it not. The dead man hears alike those who blame him and those who praise him, those who flatter him and those who complain of him; or rather he hears none of them, for

he is dead. This, then, is the second degree of mortification, higher and more perfect than the former, which St. Paul lays down when he says: *Ye are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.* (Col. iii. 3). We must not rest content with being as pilgrims in this life, but we must try to be as dead men. How is that to be? "Do you know how?" says a doctor. "Look at the condition of a dead man. The sign of one's being dead is his not seeing, nor answering, nor feeling, nor complaining, nor being proud, nor getting angry." But if you have eyes to see and judge of the doings of others and even perchance of the superior, you are not dead. If you have back-answers and excuses for what obedience bids you; if you show feeling when they tell you of your faults and rebuke you; sensitiveness and resentment, when they humble you and make no account of you, you are not dead, but very much alive to your passions, to your honor and reputation. For the dead man, although they trample on him, and run him down, and make no account of him, feels it not. Oh, how happy and blessed, says St. Bernard, is he who is in this manner dead, for this death is life, since it keeps us unspotted in the world and makes us entire strangers to it.

Great assuredly is this degree, and of high perfection; but possibly we shall be able to find something else higher and more perfect still. But where are we to go to look for it, and in whom shall we find it but in him who was rapt to the third heaven? For, says St. Bernard, if you give me another and a third degree higher and more perfect, you may well call it the third heaven. But can there be anything more than dying? Yes, there is something more than dying. Our Lord Jesus Christ *humbled and abased himself even unto death.* Is there anything more than that? Yes, St. Paul goes on to say, and the Church goes on to say it on the second night of Tenebrae: *Even unto the death of the cross* (Phil. ii. 8). To die crucified, that is more than simply to die; for the death of the cross

was a kind of death the most ignominious and shameful that there then was. This, then, is the third degree of mortification, higher and more perfect than the preceding. Thus rightly may we call it the third heaven to which also the Apostle St. Paul was caught up. *The world is crucified to me, and I to the world* (Gal. vi. 14). He does not merely say that he was dead to the world, but that he was crucified to the world and that the world was a cross to him and he to the world. That is to say, all that the world loves, the delights of the flesh, honors, riches, the vain praises of men—all that is a cross and a torment to me, and as such I abhor it; and what the world takes for a cross, for a torment and dishonor, to that I have my heart fastened and nailed; that it is that I love and embrace. This is being crucified to the world and the world to me, and the world being a cross to me and I to it.

This is a higher and more perfect degree than the first and second, says St. Bernard. The pilgrim, though he passes on and does not stop much over the things that he sees, yet after all does see them and stops some little time over them. The dead man (that is the second degree) takes prosperity and adversity equally, honors and ignominies, and makes no difference between them. But this third degree goes further and is not equally disposed to the one and the other; not only is it insensible, as the dead man is insensible, to honor and reputation, but it is a cross and torment to it to be regarded and esteemed, and it abhors such things accordingly. Not only is it insensible to marks of ignominy and contempt, but finds therein its glory and satisfaction. *Far be it from me to glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world* (Gal. vi. 14). God grant that I may never glory in anything but in the Cross of Christ, for love of Whom all that the world loves is a cross to me; and all that the world takes for a cross is my glory and great contentment. *I am full*, he says, *of consolation*,

*bathed in joy and gladness at suffering tribulations, persecutions, and affronts for Christ* (II Cor. vii. 4). This, then, is the third degree of mortification, which with much reason St. Bernard calls the third heaven for its high perfection. And though he says it under the guise of this metaphor, yet it is the common doctrine of doctors and saints that in what we understand by the third heaven the perfection of mortification consists. This is the sign by which philosophers judge whether one has attained perfection in any virtue, when he does the acts thereof with relish and delight. And so, if you wish to know if you are making progress in mortification and if you have attained to perfection in it, see whether you are pleased when they cross your will and deny you what you ask; see whether you are pleased when they despise you and make little account of you, and pained when they honor and esteem and make much of you. Let everyone, then, enter within himself, St. Bernard says, and see and examine with attention which of these degrees he has reached; and let us not stop nor rest until we reach and are caught up to this third heaven. This is what the Lord said to St. Francis: "If thou desirest Me, take bitter things for sweet and sweet things for bitter."

Caesarius relates that in a monastery of the Cistercian Order there was a religious called Ralph, a great servant of God, who had many revelations. One night, staying in the church in prayer after matins, he saw Christ our Redeemer hanging on His Cross, and along with Him fifteen religious of his order, everyone also on his cross, in company with Christ our Redeemer. And though it was night, such was the brightness and splendor that shone forth from the presence of Christ that he could see very clearly and recognize them quite well that they were all alive. Five of them were lay brothers and ten choir monks. While he stood amazed at so admirable a vision, Christ our



Redeemer spoke to him from the Cross: "Ralph, dost thou recognize who these are that thou seest crucified around Me?" He answered: "Lord, I recognize quite well who they are, but I do not understand what the vision signifies and is meant to tell me." Then the Lord said to him: "These alone of all that order of thine are they who are crucified with Me, conforming their life to My Passion."



## TENTH TREATISE

## ON MODESTY AND SILENCE





## CHAPTER I

### *How Necessary Modesty Is for the Edification and Profit of Our Neighbor*

THE modesty of which we are now to treat consists in such a government of the body, such a guard over our senses, such a way of conversing and dealing with others, and all such movements and gestures on our part as may cause edification in all who see and have anything to do with us. In this St. Augustine includes all that he has to say about modesty. It is not my intention to descend to particulars of those points in which modesty must be observed, nor to note what would be an offense against modesty; sufficient for the present will be this general rule laid down by the glorious Augustine and common to all the saints and masters of spiritual life. This is his rule: "Take care that all your actions and movements be ordered in such sort that none may be offended, but all edified"—*In omnibus motibus vestris nihil fiat quod cuiusquam offendant aspectum, sed quod vestram deceat sanctitatem*. Let there ever shine out in your comportment humility along with religious gravity and maturity, and in this way you will preserve all becoming modesty. My only aim here is to show how necessary this modesty is, especially for those whose end and institute it is to attend to the salvation and perfection, not only of their own souls, but also of those of their neighbors.

On the first head, one of the things that do greatly edify and win over our neighbor is a religious and edifying comportment. Men do not see the interior, but only the exterior, and it is that which moves and edifies them, and preaches better than the noise and din of words. So it is told of the blessed St. Francis that he said one day to his

companion, "Let us go to preach," and so went out, took a turn in the city, and returned home. His companion said to him: "But, father, are we not preaching?" "We have already preached," he answered. That sedateness and modesty with which they went through the streets was a very good sermon; it moved people to devotion and to contempt of the world, to compunction for their sins, and to the raising of their hearts and desires to the things of the next world. This is a sermon in action, more effectual than one in word.

In the second place, this modesty and happy composure serves and helps greatly for our own spiritual advancement, as we shall say presently more at length. So great is the union and tie between body and spirit, between the outer and the inner man, that what there is in one is forthwith communicated to the other. Composure of spirit leads naturally to composure of body also; and, conversely, if the body is restless and wanting in composure, the spirit at once is discomposed and restless also. Hence it is that outward modesty and composure is a great argument and sign of inward recollection and of virtue and spiritual advancement to be found within, as the hand of a clock tells of the harmonious movement of the wheels.

Hereby we have a further illustration of the first head, for this is the reason why men are so much edified by modesty and external composure, inasmuch as they thereby understand and conceive the interior virtue that there is in the soul, and esteem and value it accordingly. St. Jerome says: "The face is a mirror that reflects the soul; and according as eyes are modest or loose and wanton, they reveal the inmost secrets of the heart." And it is the pronouncement of the Holy Ghost: *As clear water reflects the countenance of them that look into it, so the prudent man knows the hearts of men by the cast of their exterior* (Prov. xxvii. 19).

There is no mirror in which a man is so well seen as virtue and peace of mind are seen in the exterior. *By the movement of the eyelids a man is known for what he is*, says the Wise Man. *The look of the face revealeth him who is sensible and judicious: a man's dress, his way of covering himself, of laughing, of walking, discover at once what he is* (Ecclus. xix. 26) : And marking the signs of an apostate he says: *He talketh with his finger, winketh his eye, stampeth his foot* (Prov. vi. 12-13).

St. Gregory Nazianzen, speaking of Julian the Apostate, says: "A great many knew not the ways of Julian till he showed them by his actions and the sovereignty that came into him; but for my part, when I set eyes on him and conversed with him at Athens, I knew what sort he was. I never saw any mark of goodness in him. His stiff neck, shrugging shoulders, his eyes lightly rolling in every direction, his fierce look, his nostrils ever ready to sneer or scorn, his feet never still, his tongue practised in malice and buffoonery, his boisterous laugh, his readiness in allowing or denying the same thing with the same breath, his remarks without order or reason, his ill-timed questions, his unmeaning answers—but why run minutely through his qualities? Before his works, I knew him; and by them I have come since to know him better. Seeing in him such indications, I burst out into the exclamation: 'Oh, what a poisonous serpent the Roman Republic is rearing for herself!' This I then said, and at the same time heartily wished I might be mistaken; and without doubt it had been much better that I had been so, since then we should not have seen those evils which have set the whole world on fire."

As an ill-regulated and ill-kept exterior is a mark and sign, an evidence and token, of fault in the interior, so is modesty and due composure a sign of virtue within, and that is why it so much edifies and impresses men. For this reason we of the Society are particularly bound to secure

this virtue with great care. For, our end and institute being to move our neighbor to good by our ministries of preaching, hearing confessions, lecturing, teaching Christian doctrine, reconciling enemies, visiting prisons and hospitals, and so forth, this outward modesty and good comportment is one of the things that give greatest weight and efficacy to our ministries, that they may be received and work fruit in souls. Great authority with our neighbor is hereby gained from the idea of virtue and inward holiness which they conceive of us, and then they receive what is said to them as coming from heaven and take it to heart. Surius tells us that Innocent II, accompanied by the cardinals, came to visit the Monastery of Clairvaux. The monks, with St. Bernard, who resided there, all went out to meet him. This sight of the monks, the story goes on to say, moved the pope and the cardinals so much that they wept for joy, all marveling at the gravity of those in that holy convent, who, notwithstanding the solemnity of the day and that extraordinary occasion of receiving his holiness attended by the sacred college, kept their eyes fixed upon the ground, without once turning them anywhere; and while they were eyed by all, they looked at none.

This modesty and religious composure serves not only to impress and edify externs, but also those of the lower seculars are much edified to see a religious assisting at Mass, never moving his head all the while from side to side, or again walking in the street in great modesty, never raising his eyes to see even who has passed close by him, and are confounded and moved to compunction, and conceive in their hearts great esteem of such religious. So also here among ourselves he gives great edification who goes about in modesty, silence, and devotion. So also St. Jerome, among other fruits of this exterior modesty and composure, puts this: Do you know, he says, what one of those religious does by his silence and modesty? He is a strong and effectual rebuke to any chatter-box who goes about with little



heed of modesty and recollection; it is a rebuke to such a one to see that he is not like his brother. These are they who people religious houses; these are they who sustain and keep up virtue and sanctity, since their example attracts and moves all the rest to devotion, and awakens them to desires of heaven. This is what our Father says to us, asking us to proceed in this matter in such a way that by mutual consideration of one another all may grow in devotion and praise God our Lord.

It is told of St. Bernardine that such was his modesty and composure that his mere presence put all his companions on their good behavior. It was not necessary to say more than "Bernardine is coming," to make them all behave properly. And of Lucian the Martyr, Metaphrastes and Surius relate in his Life that the mere sight of him converted heathens and moved them to be Christians. These are good preachers, imitators of the glorious Baptist, of whom the holy Gospel says: *He was a bright and shining light* (John v. 35), that burned with such great love of God and gave much light and illumination to his neighbor by the example of his marvelous life. This should be a great motive to us to walk always with much modesty, so as to edify our neighbors and brethren and produce in them the fruit that we have said; for where is the zeal and desire of the greater glory and honor of God and of saving souls, so proper to our institute, if we do not try to do that whereby they are so much edified and won over, it being so easily in our power?

## CHAPTER II

### *How Necessary Modesty Is for Our Own Advancement*

**I**T is the common teaching of the saints that modesty and guard over the senses is one of the chief means that there are for our own advancement, being as it is a great

help to watchfulness over the heart and inward recollection and the preservation of devotion, since it is by the gates of the senses that all evil gains entry into the heart. St. Jerome on that text of Job: *Are the gates of death open to thee, and hast thou seen the entrances into darkness?* (Job xxxviii. 17), says that in an allegorical sense our senses are the gates of death because by them the death of sin enters into our soul, according to that saying of the Prophet Jeremy: *Death hath come in through our windows* (Jer. ix. 21). He says that they are called gates of darkness because they give entry to the darkness of sins. St. Gregory says the same, and it is the common manner of speaking among the saints, drawn from the axiom of philosophy: "Nothing can enter into the understanding without first passing through the senses as through gates"—*Nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu*. Now when in a house the gates are locked and well guarded, all the rest is secure; but if they are wide open and unguarded, so that he comes in and goes out who will, the house will not be safe, or at least there will be no peace and quiet there with so much coming in and going out. So it is also here. They who keep the gates of their senses well guarded will live in peace and recollection; but they who take no care of this will have no peace or quiet of heart. Therefore the Wise Man admonishes us: *With all careful keeping guard thy heart, for out of it life proceeds* (Prov. iv. 23). *Keep thy heart*, he says; and he adds, *with all keeping*, with all care and diligence, to give us to understand the importance of this.

Now the heart is kept by guarding well the gates of the senses. St. Gregory says: "To preserve cleanness and purity of heart, it is necessary to make much account of the custody of the senses." And St. Dorotheus says: "Accustom yourself to keep your eyes modestly cast down, and not go looking about at useless and vain things, the usual effect of which is the loss of all the pains taken by a reli-

gious." All that you have gained at a heavy cost of time and labor will easily be lost to you through these gates of the senses unless you are careful to guard them, and you will find yourself empty and destitute. Oh, how well said that holy man (Ä Kempis): "That is easily lost by negligence which has been gained with much trouble and difficulty by grace." And elsewhere St. Dorotheus says: "Beware of talking much, for it is a hindrance to the holy thoughts and desires and inspirations that come from heaven." And, conversely, St. Bernard says: "Continual silence, and removal from the noise of the things of the world and forgetfulness of them, lifts up the heart and makes us think of the things of heaven and set our heart upon them." And treating of modesty of the eyes, he says: "Eyes on the ground are a great aid to keeping the heart ever in heaven." And we know well by experience that when we go about with modest and downcast eyes, we walk in recollection and devotion.

This is the reason why those holy Fathers of the Desert, as Cassian relates, said that to acquire perfect purity and cleanness of heart and maintain devotion and recollection, it was necessary to be deaf, dumb, and blind. When the gates of the senses are thus closed, the soul will be clean, at liberty, and well disposed to speak and converse with God. But someone will say: How can we be deaf, dumb, and blind, when we have so much to say to our neighbor and are forced to see and hear many things which one had rather not? The way is to hear these things as if we heard them not, that they may come in by one ear and go out by the other, without letting the heart rest upon them, nor taking any account of them. St. Ephrem relates to this purpose how a monk asked another ancient Father: "What shall I do, since the abbot bids me go to the kitchen fire and help the baker, and there are there extern youths, who talk of many silly things that it is not good for me to listen to? What shall I do?" The old man answered: "Have you not

seen boys at school, how they are all together, making so much noise, everyone reading and learning the lessons that he has to repeat to the master, and everyone attending to his own lesson and taking no notice of the others, for he knows that it is of that that he has to give an account to the master, and not of the rest? Do you the same. Pay no attention to what others say and do, but do well your own duty, since it is of that that you are to give account to God."

It is told of the blessed St. Bernard that he kept his heart so continually fixed on God that seeing he saw not, and hearing he heard not, and seemed as though he made no use of his senses. He passed a year in the novitiate, and did not know what the roof of his cell was like, whether it was vaulted or a flat timber roof. There were three glass windows in the church, and he never got to see whether there was more than one. He had traveled nearly a whole day by the shore of a lake, and hearing his companions afterwards speak of the lake, he asked them where they had seen any lake; he had caught no sight of it. It is related of Abbot Balladius that he was twenty years in one cell without ever raising his eyes to the roof. In this way, though we walk in the midst of the world, dealing with our neighbor, we shall be deaf, dumb, and blind; and the noise of what we hear and see will be no obstacle to our advancement.

### CHAPTER III

*Of the Mistake of Those Who Make Small Account of  
These Exterior Things, Saying that Perfection  
Does Not Consist in Them*

HENCE it is easily gathered how mistaken they are who make small account of these exterior things of modesty and silence, saying that perfection does not lie in that,



but in the interior of the heart and in true and solid virtues. Lipoman quotes a very good example to this purpose, drawn from the "Spiritual Meadow." He relates there that one of those ancient Fathers who dwelt in the Desert of Sythia went one day into Alexandria to sell the baskets that he had made, and saw there another monk, a very young man, who had just entered a public house. The old man felt this keenly, and resolved to wait for his coming out to give him his mind. When he did come out, he called him apart and said to him: "My brother, don't you see that you are still very young, and that many are the snares of our enemy? Do you not know the harm that a monk takes in going through cities by the figures and images that come in upon him through his eyes and ears? How dare you, then, go into public houses, where there is so much bad company of men and women and where you are forced to see evil things and hear what you would not? No, for the love of God, my son, do not so, but fly to the desert, where, by God's grace and help, you will be safe and secure." The youth answered: "All right, old man. Perfection lies not in that, but in purity of heart. I keep my heart pure, and that is what God wants." At this the old man lifted up his eyes to heaven, and cried: "Blessed and praised be Thou, O Lord! For fifty-five years I have been in the Desert of Sythia, keeping all the recollection I could, and I have not attained to purity of heart; but this frequenter of taverns and public houses has got it already." Let this, then, be your answer. I own to you that perfection essentially consists in purity of heart, in charity and the love of God, and not in these exterior things; but you will never attain to that perfection unless you make much account of the custody of your senses and the observance of exterior modesty.

St. Bonaventure notes this very well, and says that the reason of it is that the interior is acquired and preserved through the exterior, and these exterior things are the supports and defenses of the heart. We see that nature never

produces a tree without its leaves and bark, nor fruit without its rind or husk, but all things have their supports and defenses to preserve and adorn them. So also grace, which operates according to nature and more perfectly than nature, never produces the interior of virtue except through the exterior; that is the bark and husk whereby virtue is preserved, and interior recollection, and purity and cleanness of heart; and when that fails, the other fails too. As bodily health or sickness does not lie in the exterior, nor in having a good or bad color, but in the good or ill blending of the humors that there are there within, yet nevertheless when we see anyone with a bad color we at once say: "John is in a poor way; he is anything but well. Don't you see what a color he has got, what a jaundiced look, what eyes?" Now it is just the same with regard to spiritual health.

St. Basil illustrates this by a comparison, and as he makes it, so we may make it also. He presupposes that common doctrine and allegory of the saints, that the exterior senses are the windows by which the soul peeps out to see what is going on there outside. He says that there is the same difference between a recollected and a distracted soul that there is between a virtuous woman and a woman of light character. In the case of the virtuous woman, it is a wonder to see her at the window; but as for the light-headed and ill-living woman, she is all day at the window and at the door, seeing all who go by, calling out to one, talking and entertaining herself with another. This, says St. Basil, is the difference between the recollected and the distracted religious, that it is a wonder to see the recollected one peeping through the windows of her senses, hearing what is said, talking and losing time now with this party, now with that. The virtue or lewdness of a woman does not consist in her peeping at the window or not; but the woman often at the window, the woman loitering about the streets, she who loves to talk and converse now with one party, now with another, gives great indications and signs

of her levity; and that alone would be enough to make her wicked, even if she were not so before. In the same way it is true that perfection does not consist in custody of the tongue and senses; but the soul that haunts the windows and loiters about in the streets, the soul that loves to see, hear, and say things, will never gain perfection or purity of heart.

We should observe here another main point, that, as the exterior helps to compose and preserve the interior, so also the interior at once stamps composure on the exterior. "Where there is Christ, there is modesty"—*Ubi Christus est, modestia quoque est*, says St. Gregory Nazianzen. Where there is within a solid and stable virtue, at once there is gravity and seriousness in the eyes and in the tongue, much maturity of gait and in all our movements. Inward gravity and steadiness makes gravity and steadiness without. This is the modesty that our Father asks of us, a modesty springing from peace and true humility of soul; not a modesty put on and cunningly made up, for that will not last, but fails just when it is wanted—an artificial modesty in fact; *but a modesty naturally overflowing from the interior*, springing as effect from cause from a heart composed, mortified, and humble.

Hence we may gather one very good sign whereby to know whether a man is a spiritual man or not and whether he is progressing and growing in spirit or not. St. Augustine declares it by this comparison. We see that we who are now grown to manhood willingly go without many pleasures and amusements that we had as children—which it would have cost us much pain to have given up then, and now we do not feel the loss of them, for they are amusements and sports of children, whereas we are now men. In like manner, on the soul's journey, when we begin to taste God and the things of virtue, and one is becoming a spiritual man and a perfect man, one feels no pain in foregoing those sensible pleasures and satisfactions which one enjoyed

as a child and as one imperfect in virtue. Those are the delights and pastimes of children, and you are now a man. *When I was a child, I felt as a child, and thought as a child, and acted as a child, but now that I am a man I have given over the things of a child* (I Cor. xiii. 11). If, then, you wish to see whether you are a man, progressing and growing in perfection, or whether you are still a child, see whether you have given over and forgotten the things of a child; for if you still have a taste for the sports and amusements of children, a child you are. If you have a relish for pieces of childishness, for giving free vent to your senses, for feasting your eyes, going about and looking at curious and vain things, and your ears in hearing all that goes on, and your tongue in idle and useless talks and conversations, you are but a child and imperfect, since you have a taste for the pastimes and amusements of children and imperfect people. He who is a spiritual person and goes on growing and becoming a perfect man, has no taste for these things, but rather ridicules and scorns them, as a grown man scorns the sports and amusements of children, and would blush to take part in them.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### *Of Silence, and the Great Blessings and Advantages There Are in It*

ONE of the means that will greatly help our progress in virtue and attainment of perfection will be to refrain and mortify the tongue; and, contrariwise, one of the things that will most injure and impede our progress will be to be careless on this point. St. James tells us the one and the other in his canonical epistle. On the one hand he says: *If any man offend not in word, he is a perfect man* (iii. 2). And on the other: *If any man thinketh to be religious, and restraineth not his tongue, he deceiveth himself, and his*



*religion is vain* (i. 26). St. Jerome quotes this authority to recommend the keeping of silence, and says that those old Fathers of the Desert, resting on this sentence and doctrine of the Apostle St. James, took great care to keep it. He says that he found many of those holy Fathers who had passed seven years without speaking to anyone. Hence also Denis the Carthusian says that all religious orders have come to put among the chief observances of their order the observance of silence, and that with such severity that they enacted and ordained that he who broke it should be chastised with a public discipline.

But let us see what can be the reason why we have this matter recommended to us so much. Is it such a grave offense to speak one idle word? Is it more than losing a little time which is wasted in saying it, a bit of a venial sin that is cleared away by taking holy water? It must be more than losing a little time; the matter must be of more weight than it appears, seeing that Holy Scripture makes so much of it; for Holy Scripture is not given to exaggerations, nor weighs things otherwise than according to their just weight. The saints and doctors of the Church, to whom the Lord gives particular light to understand and declare the mysteries of the divine Scriptures, enlarge greatly upon the advantages that follow from the observance of the rule of silence and the great losses that ensue upon the contrary. St. Basil says that it is very profitable, especially for beginners, to practise silence; in the first place, in order to learn how to speak as is proper, for to speak well many circumstances are required, and it is a matter of difficulty, and of great difficulty. And since to learn other sciences and arts we reckon many years well employed to come out proficient therein, it will also be reasonable to employ some years in learning this science of knowing how to speak; for if you do not make yourself a pupil and pay attention to learning, you will never turn out a master.

But you will say: "By talking much we shall learn how to talk, as other sciences and arts are learned by much practice in them." To this I answer with St. Basil that this science of knowing how to speak well cannot be learned without keeping silence and much practice in keeping silence. The reason is that speaking well depends on so many circumstances; and we have such a bad habit of blurt-ing out, regardless of these circumstances, just what comes into our head and whatever it pleases us to think, and that in any tone we like to take, without order, without consistency. Two things, mainly necessary for anyone to know how to speak, are achieved by silence. The first thing is that by dint of much silence we forget the evil style of conversation that we brought with us at the outset from the world; which forgetting goes a long way to help us to learn a good style of conversation, as reciprocally the good style goes to make us forget the evil style that we had contracted. The second thing is that by this silence we find ample room and time to learn the right style of conversation. It gives us opportunity in abundance to look at those ancient religious, whom we understand to be experts in this science and who know how to speak properly, to learn of them and get impressed upon us that stamp of maturity which they show in their speech, and that repose and gravity of words. As an apprentice learns by looking to see how his master does things, that he may come to do the like, and so learning come out as a master, so we should look at men who are singularly excellent on this point, to learn of them. Look at that ancient brother here and that father there, what a good habit of speech he has, how graciously he dispatches and answers those who converse and deal with him. However occupied he be, he seems to have no other business on hand but to answer you; you will always find him in one mood, always like himself—not as you, who when you are much occupied give ungracious and snappish answers. Look at that other, when any order

comes to him on the part of obedience, how well he answers: "Just so, with all my heart," without excuses, without asking who gives the order, or whether there is anyone else who could do the job. Look at that other, how incapable he is of saying anything to wound anybody, or give offense to a brother, either at recreation or out of recreation, either as a sneer or for the fun of the thing, either in presence or absence of the person spoken of; how he speaks to all and of all with respect and esteem; and do you learn to speak in that manner. Notice this other, how, when they have spoken to him a little word that he might resent, does not answer tit for tat, but handsomely dissembles as though he had not heard it, according to the word of the prophet, *I became as one not hearing* (Psalm xxxvii. 15), because he has learned well how to conquer himself and his brother. Do you learn to behave in that manner on like occasions. For these two reasons St. Basil says that a long silence is very profitable; because by disuse it begets forgetfulness of old habits of evil speech and gives scope and room enough to learn how to speak properly.

On the text, *There is a time to be silent, and a time to speak* (Eccles. iii. 7), St. Ambrose and St. Jerome allege the practice of that ancient philosopher, Pythagoras. The first lesson he gave his disciples was to keep silence for five years, that during that long period of silence they might forget their evil manners, and listen to him speaking, and learn how they should in future speak, and so become masters in the art. Hence St. Jerome concludes: "Let us, then, learn first to be silent, that afterwards we may know how to speak. Let us keep silence for a time; let us study those who are eminent in this science to imitate them; let us become disciples, that afterwards, after much silence, we may turn out masters."

And though these saints are speaking to beginners, nevertheless what has been said touches us all. For either you are a senior or a novice, or you wish as regards the custody

of your tongue to be like a novice or like a senior; choose which you will. If you are a novice, or wish to be like a novice, the first lesson will have to be to keep silence until you know how to speak well, as has been said. If you are a senior, or wish to be like a senior, you must be the example and pattern on which the novice is to look, and from which the beginner is to learn. But I had rather you played the senior than the novice, since the senior is bound to more; it was for this that you were a novice and were silent so long, that you might learn to speak; and it is only to be expected that you should know how to speak after so long a time. But if you have never been a novice and have never learned to speak, it is necessary that you should be as a novice now; because so you will learn to speak what is proper, when it is proper, and as it is proper.

## CHAPTER V

### *That Silence Is a Very Important Means to Be a Man of Prayer*

**S**ILENCE is not only helpful for learning to speak with men, but equally helpful and very necessary for learning how to speak and converse with God and be men of prayer. So says St. Jerome; and on this account he says it was that those Fathers made so much account of silence. "For this it was that those holy Fathers of the Desert, taught by the Holy Ghost, kept holy silence with extreme care, as being the source of holy contemplation." St. Diadochus, treating of silence, says that it is the mother of holy and lofty thoughts, and a great and excellent thing accordingly. If, then, you wish to be a spiritual man and a man of prayer, if you wish to deal and converse with God, keep silence. If you wish always to have good thoughts and hear the inspirations of God, keep silence and recollection. As some men are deaf through an impediment they have



in the organ of hearing, while others do not hear on account of the great noise, so also the noise and racket of the words and things and affairs of the world hinders men and makes them deaf to hearing the inspirations of God, and taking account of what befits us. God looks for solitude in order to deal with a soul. *I will lead her into solitude*, says the Prophet Osee, *and there I will speak to her heart*; there shall be consolations and heavenly favors; *there I will give her milk at my breasts* (Osee ii. 14), to signify the favors and bounties that God does to the soul when it recollects itself in this manner. St. Bernard says: "God is a spirit, not a body; and therefore He seeks a spiritual, not a bodily, solitude." And St. Gregory: "Little good comes of solitude of the body, if solitude of the heart is wanting." What the Lord looks for is that there in your heart you should make a resting place and a cell to converse with God, and for His Divine Majesty to delight to deal and converse with you. Then you may say with the prophet: *I have fled far away, and stayed in solitude* (Psalm liv. 8). To this end it is not necessary that you should turn hermit, or fly from dealing and conversing with your neighbor.

Further, if you wish to be always devout, well disposed, and ready to get on well with your meditation, keep silence. St. Diadochus says very well that as, when the door of the bathroom is opened many times, the heat quickly goes out that way; so when one talks much, all the heat of devotion goes out by the mouth; the heart is thereupon poured out and the soul left destitute of good thoughts. It is a sight to see how quickly all the sap of devotion disappears when the mouth is opened to talk without restraint; our heart is lost to us through the mouth. Moreover, if you wish to have much free time and to save and gain many long intervals for prayer, keep silence, and you will see that you have time in abundance to commune with God and with yourself. Oh, how well that holy man [A Kempis] said: "If

you would keep away from idle conversations and going about to no purpose, hearing news and stories of other people, you would find time ready to hand to think of good things." But if you are a lover of talking and pouring yourself out by the senses, do not be surprised that you are always short of time and never have enough for your ordinary exercises, as we read (Exod. v. 12) of the children of Israel that they were scattered through Egypt looking for straw, and so could not accomplish their ordinary tasks, and were chastised accordingly.

There is another main point to be observed, full of spiritual instruction; it is that, as silence leads up to contemplation, so also meditation and contemplation and converse with God lead to silence. Moses said to God: *Lord, since thou hast begun to speak and converse with me, I am become a stammerer and indistinct in speech* (Exod. iv. 10). And the Prophet Jeremy, in beginning to speak to God, says that he is turned into a child and knows not how to speak (Jerem. i. 6). St. Gregory observes here that spiritual men, who hold converse and commerce with God, become thereupon dumb for the things of this world, and talking and hearing talk of them offends them because they do not wish to speak or hear of anything else but of what they love and bear in their heart, and everything else cloyes and annoys them. And here we have experience of it. If you do not believe me, see how, when the Lord has blessed you at meditation and you come out from it with devotion, you have no mind to talk to anybody, nor to raise your eyes in one direction or another, nor to hear news; but you feel as though they had put a padlock on your mouth and on all your other senses. What is the reason of that? The reason is that you were occupied and taken up with God; therefore you had no mind to go seeking amusements and consolations from without. And, contrariwise, when one goes talking, pouring himself out here, and full of distractions, it is because there is no spirit, no devotion, no entertainment

there within. So says that holy man [Å Kempis]: "What is the reason why we so willingly talk and converse with others, seeing how seldom we come back to silence without some wound to our conscience?" The reason, he says, is "that by talking we seek comfort from another and relief for our heart wearied with various thoughts, and we enjoy thinking and talking of those things that we like or detest." We cannot live without some entertainment and satisfaction; and not finding it within, in our heart with God, we seek it in exterior things.

That is the reason why here in religion we make so much account of these and the like exterior faults, though of themselves they appear small. It is because these exterior faults, such as breaking silence and losing time and the like, are a sign of the little growth in holiness and the little interior virtue that there is within. One shows thereby that one has not entered into spiritual life nor begun to find satisfaction in God, since one does not know how to entertain oneself with God alone in one's cell. When there is no lock to a chest, we thereby understand that there is nothing valuable inside. When a nut is very light and bounces, it is a sign that it has no kernel. This is the main point that we regard in these things, and the reason why we make so much account of them.

## CHAPTER VI

### *That Silence Is a Direct Means of Spiritual Advancement and the Attainment of Perfection*

A VERY spiritual and learned father [Father Nadal] used to say of silence a thing very particular and noteworthy, well showing its importance; and though some may think it an overstatement and exaggeration, it is not so, but plain truth, well borne out by experience. He said that to reform a house or a whole religious order, nothing more

is needed than to reform it in point of silence. Let there be silence in a house, and I will warrant you its reformation. No greater thing, one would think, could be said in praise of silence, since this includes everything. The reason is that, when there is silence in a house, everyone minds his own business and the purpose that brought him to religion, which was to aim at his own spiritual advancement. But when silence is not, then there are complaints, grumbling parties, backbitings, and particular friendships, which are fomented by these conversations and familiarities. Then there is wasting of one's own time and making others waste theirs, and many other undesirable consequences following therefrom. Thus we see that, when there is no silence in a house, it does not look like a religious house, but a secular. Conversely, when there is silence, it forthwith has the air of a religious house and a paradise. As soon as you come in by the door, everything is redolent of holiness. This solitude and silence elevates the spirit and moves those who enter to devotion. *Truly the Lord dwelleth here, this is the house of God* (Gen. xxviii. 16-17). In the same way I say of any individual: reform him in point of silence, and I warrant him for a reformed man. By experience we see that, when we have talked much, we then find in our examen that we have fallen into many faults. *Where there is much talking, there is poverty* (Prov. xiv. 23), and misery, and matter of weeping. And when we have kept silence well, we hardly find anything to make our examen on. *He who guardeth his mouth, guardeth his soul* (Prov. xiii. 3). Even among the heathen, Chari-tans, a leading man and great doctor among the Lacedemonians, being asked why Lycurgus gave so few laws to the Lacedemonians, answered: "Because they who speak so little as they do have small need of laws." Thus silence is enough to reform any individual and to reform a house and a whole order. And this is the reason why those ancient saints so much esteemed and practised silence; and



why all orders have inscribed among their observances, for one of the chiefest of all, that of silence. Therefore Denis the Carthusian says that St. James says: *If any man sin not with his tongue, the same is a perfect man; and if any man thinketh to be religious, not bridling his tongue, that man's religion is vain* (iii. 2; i. 26).

Let each one, then, consider attentively how little we ask of him in order to his being perfect, and what an easy means we give him to that end. If you wish to advance much in virtue and gain perfection, keep silence, for thereby the Apostle St. James says that you will gain it. If you want to be a spiritual man and a man of prayer, keep silence, for in that way the saints say that you will ensure it. Contrariwise, if you take no care of keeping silence, you will never attain perfection; you will never be a man of prayer; you will never be very spiritual. If otherwise, tell me if you have ever seen any man who was a great talker and chatter-box to be very contemplative and spiritual; you will not even find him at all proficient. *Shall the talkative man be justified?* asks holy Job (xi. 2). No, says St. Gregory on that text; the talker shall not be justified, nor come to much good. And the prophet: *The talkative man and babbler shall not raise his head in the land* (Psalm cxxxix. 12). He shall not thrive; he shall not grow; he shall come under the malediction of the patriarch Jacob: *Thou art poured out like water, thou shalt not increase* (Gen. xliv. 4). If you have poured out your heart by these gates of the mouth and the senses, going beyond bounds to gather various distractions, you shall not grow, you shall not thrive.

The saints well liken the man who does not keep his mouth guarded and shut, to a vessel without a cover, which God commanded to be held for unclean: *vas quod non habuerit operculum, nec ligaturam desuper semper immundum erit* (Num. xix. 15), because it is ready to receive within itself any uncleanness, and speedily gets filled with dust

and nastiness; so does his soul quickly fill with imperfections and sins, whose mouth is not kept shut. So says the Holy Ghost through the Wise Man, and repeats it many times. *He who talketh much will do hurt to his soul* (Ecclus. xx. 88). *He who talketh much will go wrong on some point* (Eccles. v. 2). *There will not fail to be sin where there is much talking* (Prov. x. 19). Would to God we had not experience of this so often as we have! St. Gregory says well: "You will begin with a good word, and thence you will come to an idle word, and from that you will jump at once to a jesting word, thence at once to an ill-natured word; and little by little you will wax warm in your speech and grow in your desire to heighten facts and make them appear considerable; and when you think not, you will have slipped into lies, malicious perhaps, and even pernicious lies: you will begin with a little, and end with a good deal." Such is often the way, to begin with buffoonery and end in detraction. Albertus Magnus says: "Where there is no silence, one is easily overcome by the enemy." And he quotes Proverbs (xxv. 28): *As a city open and without circuit of walls, so is the man who cannot restrain himself in speech.* On which words St. Jerome says that, as the city open and without walls is much exposed to be entered and sacked by the enemy, so he who is not sheltered by this wall of silence is much exposed and in great danger of being overcome by the temptations of the devil.

And we may add another particular reason for this. A man in the world who is off his guard and taken up with many different things may easily make a mistake, but he who is on his guard, not so easily; so he who does not keep silence may readily be led astray by the devil, because he is distracted, taken up and absorbed in irrelevant matters; but he who walks in silence and recollection, walks always wide-awake and always on his guard, and so the devil will not so easily catch him or lead him to take a false step.

## CHAPTER VII

*That to Live in Modest Silence and Recollection Is Not a Sad but a Very Cheerful Life*

HENCE follows a thing worthy of notice in this matter, that this manner of life, in recollection, going about with downcast eyes, without seeking to say or hear more than what is necessary, making oneself blind, deaf, and dumb for God, is not a sad and melancholy life but rather a very cheerful and joyous one—all the more so, inasmuch as the conversation and company of God, to which we are invited and raised by recollection, is sweeter than that of man. St. Jerome says: "Let others think as they please, since everyone speaks of the fair according as he gets on at it. What I have to say of myself is that the town is a prison to me, and the wilderness a paradise." And St. Bernard used to say: "Never am I less alone than when I am alone"—*Nunquam minus solus quam cum solus*. It was then that he was most in company, and most cheerful and joyful; because what satisfied and gave true contentment to his heart was communing and conversing with God. To persons who cannot carry on this inward converse, and have no idea of spiritual life nor of prayer, nor have ever found any taste for spiritual things, such a life will be sad and melancholy, but not to a good religious.

This will throw light on another hallucination. As the robber takes all the world to be thieves, so there are some who, seeing a brother devout and recollected, going about with downcast eyes and, unlike themselves, not picking up a conversation with everyone he meets, at once put him down as suffering from some temptation, or being a sad and melancholy character, and sometimes tell him as much. For fear of this imputation there are those who do not dare to practise that modesty and silence which they would fain practise and ought to practise. This is a point greatly to

be attended to, that no one should do harm in a community by his want of discretion and appreciation of the things of the spirit. Because you have no idea of finding any joy or satisfaction in silence and recollection, you fancy that neither has anyone else. Or perhaps that brother's modesty offends you because it is a continual reproach to your want of modesty and recollection, and you cannot abide it. Let that other man go forward in his own way, which brings him in more joy and contentment than you have in yours; because it is a spiritual and true joy, which is what St. Paul says: *Seeming sad, they are full of joy* (II Cor. vi. 10). Though it seems to you sadness, it is really great contentment and inward gladness. Even the heathen Seneca gave this admonition to his friend Lucilius: "True joy is not in the outward man, but here within the heart." As gold and fine metal is not what is found on the surface of the earth, but what is in the veins and bowels thereof, so true joy and satisfaction is not what one shows in his exterior, talking, laughing, and chatting with this party and that—for that neither fills nor satisfies the soul—but what is within, like fine gold, in the vitals and innermost recesses of the heart. In keeping a good conscience and a generous spirit, despising all things of the world and rising above them, in this does true joy and contentment lie.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Of the Circumstances Necessary for Speaking Well*

**S**ET, O Lord, a guard to my mouth, and a gate of circumstance to my lips (Psalm cxl. 3), a gate wherewith my lips can be closed. The blessed saints and doctors of the Church, Ambrose and Gregory, speaking of the many evils and mischiefs that follow from the tongue—whereof Holy Scripture is full, and the Sapiential Books particularly—and strongly recommending to us the observance of silence



by way of escape from so many mischiefs and dangers, say: What, then, are we to do? Are we to be dumb? We do not mean to say that, say the saints, since the virtue of silence does not consist in not speaking. As the virtue of temperance does not consist in not eating, but in eating when necessary and what is necessary, and for the rest abstaining; so the virtue of silence does not consist in not speaking, but in knowing how to be silent at the proper time and knowing how to speak at the proper time. They quote to this effect that saying of Ecclesiastes: *There is a time to speak and a time to be silent* (iii. 7). Thus much discretion is needed to succeed in doing each of these things in its proper time; for as it is a fault to speak when it is not proper, so also is it to fail to speak when one ought to speak.

These two things, say the saints, the prophet gives us to understand in the words quoted: *Set, O Lord, a guard to my mouth*. What dost thou ask, holy prophet? A gate where-with my lips may be closed. St. Gregory well observes that David does not ask for a wall in his mouth, and to have it closed with stone and mortar, so that it never should be opened, but a gate that is opened and closed at proper times, to give us to understand that we must be silent and shut our mouth at the right time, and open it at the right time, and that here in this discretion lies the value of silence. The same is what the Wise Man asks, saying: *Who will set a guard on my mouth, and a seal on my lips, that I may not come to fall by them and my own tongue condemn me!* (Ecclus. xxii. 3; xxviii. 28). So many circumstances and conditions are necessary to speak without mistake, that the Wise Man with reason fears to be lost through his tongue and asks for this discretion to know how to open and shut his mouth at proper times; for the failure of one circumstance is enough to cause a mistake; and for one's speech to hit the mark and be good, all the circumstances must concur without one failing. There is this difference between

good and evil, between virtue and vice, that a concurrence of all circumstances is necessary for virtue, without one being wanting, whereas for vice the failure of one is sufficient. *Bonum ex integra causa, malum ex singularibus defectibus.*

St. Basil, St. Ambrose, St. Bernard, and others lay down in common the circumstances that are necessary to speak well. The first and chief is to look carefully first at what one has to say. Nature herself gives us clearly to understand the caution we should observe on this point. She has guarded and screened off the tongue not by one gate and lock only, but by two; first by the teeth and after that by the lips. She has put a wall and barbican to the tongue, whereas to the ears she has not put any locked enclosure, that thereby we might understand what difficulty and caution we should show in speaking, and what promptitude and readiness in hearing, according to that saying of the Apostle St. James: *Let every man be quick to hear, but slow to speak* (i. 19). The same lesson is taught by the anatomy of the tongue, since there are in it two veins, one of which goes to the heart and the other to the brain, where philosophers place the seat of the understanding, to give us to understand that what is to be said should proceed from the heart and be regulated by the reason. And this is the first advice that St. Augustine gives us how to speak well. "Every word," he says, "should go to the file (*ad limam*) before going to the tongue (*ad linguam*)."<sup>1</sup> It should be first registered in the heart, and filed down according to the rule of reason before coming out by the mouth. This is the difference which Ecclesiasticus puts between the wise man and the fool: *Fools keep their heart in their tongue* (xxi. 29), because they give themselves over without restraint to their tongue and its disorderly craving for talking, and say whatever comes into their mouth, the heart consenting at once as though heart and tongue were one. But the wise and prudent keep their tongue in

their heart because all that they have got to say comes forth from it according to the counsel of reason. They keep their tongue submissive and subject to their heart, and not their heart to their tongue, as fools do.

St. Cyprian says that, as a sober and temperate man takes nothing into his stomach without having first masticated it thoroughly, so a prudent and discreet man utters no word from his mouth without having first ruminated it right well in his heart, for from words not well weighed or thought over disputes commonly arise. St. Vincent says that we should make as much difficulty over opening our mouth to speak as over opening our purse to pay. How leisurely and how thoughtfully does a man open his purse! First he looks well to see if there is anything to pay at all, and to what amount. In this way and with this reluctance you should open your mouth to speak, looking first to see if you ought to speak at all, and then what you ought to say, and whether you are not saying more words than you ought, as in the former case a man looks to see that he does not pay more than he owes. This agrees with what St. Bonaventure says, that one should be as cautious and close over one's words as a miser over his money. St. Bernard is not content with this, but says: "Before speaking, let the word pass twice over the file ere it once passes the tongue." And St. Bonaventure says the same. St. Ephrem says: "Before you speak, communicate first with God what you have to say and the reason and cause for saying it, and then speak as one who is fulfilling the will of God, Who wishes you to say what you do say." This is the chief circumstance required for speaking well, and if we observe this we shall easily be able to observe the rest.

The second circumstance that we have to look to in speaking is the end and intention that moves us to speak. It is not enough that our words be good; the end also must be good. For some, as St. Bonaventure says, say pious things to appear spiritual men; others to show themselves off as

shrewd and well-spoken—the one of which courses is hypocrisy and pretense; the other, vanity and folly.

The third circumstance, says St. Basil, is that you must look who you are that speak, and to whom and before whom you are speaking. And he gives here good lessons how the young should behave before the old, and they who are not priests before priests, resting all on texts of Holy Scripture. *Be not talkative in a gathering of ancients* (Ecclus. vii. 15). It is a mark of good breeding and reverence to be silent in presence of elders and in presence of priests. St. Bernard says that youths honor their elders by silence—a good way of showing reverence and recognition—and by yielding them the precedence. And he adds a good reason. “Silence,” he says, “is a chief part of bashfulness, a quality that sits well upon youth.” St. Bonaventure, enlarging upon this, says that, as the fear of God composes and sets in order a man’s interior and makes him stand well with God, so bashfulness composes and sets in order his exterior and makes him observe modesty, courtesy, and silence in presence of his elders.

The fourth circumstance, says St. Ambrose, is to consider the time at which one is to speak, for one of the principal traits of prudence is to know how to say things in their right time. *The wise and prudent man will be silent and bide his time; but the foolish and indiscreet hath no eye for time and opportunities* (Ecclus. xx. 7). And of him who knows how to observe this circumstance of speaking at the right time, the Holy Ghost says: *Golden apples on settings of silver, such a thing it is to say the right thing at the right time* (Prov. xxv. 11). This looks well and gives great satisfaction. And, contrariwise, though the thing said be good, yet if it is not said at the right time, it is taken amiss. *From the mouth of the fool, says the Wise Man, the sententious word is not well received, because it is not said at the right time* (Ecclus. xx. 22). To this circumstance it belongs not to interrupt anyone, which is



bad manners and shows scant humility; nor is it a good time to speak when another is speaking. *While another is speaking, interrupt him not*, says the Wise Man. Wait till he finishes what he has to say; then shall you come in with your opinion. To this also is reduced what he adds elsewhere: *Answer not until you have heard to the end what they are saying to you: for that is showing oneself a fool and worthy of confusion* (Prov. xviii. 13). Such a one shows himself a man of slender balance of mind, and often brings confusion on himself by answering wide of the mark. He thought they were going to say something, and they were not going to say that, but something else; he has put his foot into it from being too sharp. St. Basil gives a further advice about answering: If another person be asked, be you silent. And when there are many together and they are told to speak their mind on a question, if they do not ask you in particular, it shows a lack of humility to seek to make yourself the spokesman and take the matter up in the name of all. Until they tell you in particular to speak, be silent.

The fifth circumstance which the saints lay down for speaking well, is *modus loquendi*, the manner and tone of voice, according to what we are told in our rule: "Let all speak in a subdued voice, as becomes religious." This is a chief circumstance, or, to speak more correctly, a large constituent part of silence. On those words that Martha said to her sister when Christ our Redeemer came to raise Lazarus: *Martha called Mary in silence, saying: The Master is come, and calleth for thee* (John xi. 28), St. Augustine asks how can she be said to say, *The Master calleth thee*, in silence? And he answers that speaking in a low voice is called silence. Here in religion, when the religious speak to one another in various offices in a low voice, we say that silence is then kept in the house. But when they talk in a loud voice, even though the things said be necessary, they are not keeping silence. Thus for there to be

silence in all the working-rooms, and the house to have the air of a religious house, and ourselves to look like religious, it is necessary to speak low. St. Bonaventure says it is a great fault in a religious to speak loud. It is enough that you speak in such a way that those about can hear you. And if you want to say anything to one who is at a distance, go there and say it, because it befits not religious modesty to cry out even to those who are far off. And St. Bonaventure observes that nighttime and the time of repose and recollection require even more particularly that talking be done in a very low voice, not to disturb others at that time. And the same requirement attaches to particular places, as the sacristy, entrance hall, and refectory.

St. Bonaventure says that to this circumstance of the manner of speaking there belongs also the habit of speaking with serenity of countenance, not making gestures with the mouth, notably compressing or expanding the lips, or showing signs with the eyes, or wrinkles in the forehead or on the nose, or shakings of the head, or much gesticulating with the hands—all this is commended to us by our Father in his Rules of Modesty. St. Ambrose and St. Bernard also say that it belongs to this circumstance that the voice be not affected, or quavering with womanish softness, but that it be the voice of a grave man. But while the manner of speech must not be affected or effeminate, they say that it must not be rough, hoarse, or wondrously grave either. The manner of speaking of a religious should always be grave, but with a gravity mingled with sweetness. And while a kind manner is always necessary in speaking, it is particularly necessary when we wish to give an admonition or a rebuke; for if that be not done kindly, all the good effect of it will be lost. St. Bonaventure says very well that, when one admonishes or corrects another with emotion and anger, he seems to do it rather out of impatience and desire to wound than out of charity and zeal to amend the offender. Virtue is not taught by vice,

nor patience by impatience, nor humility by pride. The example of your patience and meekness will give the culprit more edification than your reasons. So says St. Ambrose: "Warning and admonition must be without roughness and without offense"—*Monitio sine asperitate, hortatio sine offensione*. They quote to this purpose the saying of the Apostle St. Paul: *Scold not an elder, but entreat him as a father* (I Tim v. 1).

Here also is justly blamed an affected utterance put on on purpose to appear a highly discreet and well-spoken person. So those preachers are very reprehensible who aim at a highly-wrought and over-polished diction and make particular study of the same; whereby they lose the spirit and fruit of their sermons. They say that speech should be like water, leaving no taste if it is good.

Finally, the circumstances requisite for speaking well are so many that it will be a great wonder not to fail in some of them; and therefore a very good resource it is to betake ourselves to the port of silence, where by merely holding our tongue we ward off the many inconveniences and dangers that there are in speaking, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *He who guardeth his mouth and his tongue guardeth his soul from anguishes* (Prov. xxi. 23). And so said one of those ancient Fathers: "Only be silent, and you will find rest and quiet in any place." And even the heathen Seneca said: "There is nothing so profitable as keeping quiet, speaking as little as possible with others, and as much as may be with oneself"—*Minimum cum aliis loqui, secum plurimum*. Very celebrated is that saying of the holy Abbot Arsenius, which he used to repeat many times, and even sing it, as Surius in his History says: "I have often repented of having spoken, never of having kept silence"—*Me saepe paenituit dixisse, nunquam autem tacuisse*. The same is told of Socrates. And Seneca gives the reason of this: He who is silent can speak afterwards, but he who has spoken cannot get out of having spoken.

And another says: "A word once flying from the lip cannot be gathered back again"—*Semel emissum volat irrevocabile verbum* (Horace). And St. Jerome: "A word coming out of the mouth is like a stone flung from the hand—*Lapis emissus est sermo prolatus*; you cannot stop its going its way and doing mischief; wherefore you must needs look well at what you have to say before letting it pass your lips"—which is the first admonition that we gave.

Let us, then, make up our minds to set a good guard over our tongue, saying with the prophet: *I have resolved and determined to set a guard over my ways, that I sin not with my tongue* (Psalm xxxviii. 2). St. Ambrose on these words says: "There are ways that we should follow and ways that we should set a guard over; the ways of God we should follow and our own we should set a guard over," that we may not precipitate ourselves and go to perdition by falling into sin; and "we shall set a guard," he goes on to say, "by keeping silence." It is related in church history that a monk named Pambo, being an unlettered man, went to a learned monk to teach him; and hearing this verse, *I have determined to set a guard over my ways, that I sin not with my tongue*, he would not let his master proceed further to the second verse, but said to him: "If I can accomplish that, that lesson alone will be enough for me." Six months afterwards, his master met him and reproved him for not having come back again to take a lesson. He replied: "Really, father, I still have on hand to accomplish the first that I heard." Many years afterwards an intimate acquaintance asked him if he had by this time learned the verse. He answered: "It is forty-nine years since I first heard it, and I have hardly been able to put it into practice." But he had done so, although in his humility he doubted it; for Palladius relates of him that he took the lesson so well to heart and put it so well into practice that, before speaking or answering what he was asked, he always lifted up his heart to God and communed and conversed with Him, according



to the advice that we have mentioned. And the story goes on that hereby he drew so much assistance from God that when he was at the point of death, he said that he never remembered having spoken a word that he regretted having spoken.

Surius relates of a holy virgin [St. Mary of Oña] that one time she kept silence from the Feast of the Cross in September until Christmas, without uttering a word all that time; and that this was so pleasing to God that it was revealed to her that by that work of mortification of the tongue she had gained a free passage without passing through purgatory when she died.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Of the Vice of Backbiting or Detraction*

**D**O not backbite one another, brethren, says the Apostle St. James (iv. 11); do not tell stories of one another. *Detractors*, says St. Paul, *are abhorred of God* (Rom. i. 30); and the Wise Man says also they are *the abomination of men* (Prov. xxiv. 9). Men abominate talebearers and hold them in great aversion and abhorrence; and though outwardly they laugh and seem to enjoy their company, they at heart think ill of them and beware of them, because what they do to others in their presence, they know they will do to them in presence of others. This were enough to make us fly and abhor this vice, for what greater evil could there be than to be abhorred of God and men? But apart from that, I would wish for the present briefly to declare the gravity and malice of this vice and how easily a man may come to sin mortally on this point, that so we may use our best endeavors to remove ourselves far from so great a danger. Its gravity and malice consists in its blackening and destroying the fame and good name and reputation of your neighbor, which is more precious and

valuable than property and material wealth, according to those sayings of the Wise Man: *Better is a good name than great riches* (Prov. xxii. 1) : *Have a care of a good name, for it is worth more and will be more lasting than a thousand precious and great treasures* (Ecclus. xli. 15). And so the doctors say that detraction is a greater and graver sin than theft, inasmuch as reputation and a good name is more precious and valuable than material goods. And coming to consider in particular when detraction amounts to a mortal sin and when it is only venial, they say what they usually say of all other sins which of their kind are mortal. As theft is of itself a mortal sin, but may be venial by reason of "parvity of matter," as when one steals an apple or a penny; so detraction of its kind is a mortal sin, but may be no more than venial when it is only a light matter that one brings up against another.

Nevertheless they observe here what has an important bearing on the case, giving us to understand the danger there is in it and the caution that it is necessary to observe over things that appear small. Oftentimes those things are not so small or light as people take them to be. Theologians say that to tell a venial sin of another, as that Jack told a lie, would not be a mortal sin if it were said of seculars, because with them it is a light thing and they do not lose their reputation for that; yet it may be a mortal sin to tell a venial sin or even an imperfection of a religious because that may do more dishonor to him, and injure his good name more, than telling a mortal sin of a secular. It is clear that, if I say of a religious that he is a liar, such a religious loses caste in your eyes more than there in the world a secular of loose life would lose by men's saying of him that he goes the whole of Lent without fasting or that he is a nightwalker. And it is necessary to observe that this matter of sinning mortally by detracting and speaking ill of another is not measured by what is said of him being a mortal sin or not, but by the esteem and reputation which

he loses. We should always proceed on this understanding and take it for a first principle in the matter. Most certainly it is no sin whatever for one to be of Jewish or Moorish lineage, and nevertheless all doctors instance it as a mortal sin to defame a man in either of these two particulars.

In the same manner if I say of a religious that he is imprudent, that he is wanting in common sense (this is the express example which doctors give), that religious loses thereby more of his good name and reputation than a secular would by having a mortal sin told of him; thus there is more danger in this matter than there appears. I take this man for a good religious, steady and sensible; you say, with a twirl of the hand, "Anthony is so-so," giving it to be understood that he is a man little to be trusted. So saying, you have undone him; he is fallen far from the high opinion that people had of him before. A visitor comes from another house; and if there be any matter of disedification there, that is the first thing that he tells, and begins to characterize one member of that community as haughty, another as obstinate and headstrong, a third as a restless intriguer. These things are no light things; they are apt greatly to tarnish the reputation of a religious. If anyone thinks otherwise, let him look at the matter as applied to himself. If another were to say these things of you and gave you such a character, see how you would feel it. Now this is the rule of charity which we should observe with our brethren.

We above all men, we who aim at perfection, ought to be very far from these doubts and fears: "Did I by what I said do notable injury to my brothers in respect of the esteem and good opinion which the others had of him? Did it amount to a mortal sin or not?" As we say in the matter of the vow of poverty: "Have I cause to put myself in doubt as to whether what I received or gave away without leave amounted to the quantity sufficient for a mortal sin?"

Very often we cannot determine for certain whether it amounted to that or not. Now it is harassing enough to put oneself in that danger; for all that the world can give, one should not put oneself in such doubt. We must proceed with great caution and care in little things, otherwise we shall very easily find ourselves full of scruples and uneasinesses of conscience and doubts about mortal sin. In this matter of talebearing it is even more necessary to be on our guard since we have great inclination thereto, and the light and easy pace at which the tongue goes is also very great. There is this difference between people who aim at perfection and those who do not, that those who aim at perfection make more account of small faults than the others of great ones. This is one of those tests which go a long way to show whether one is in earnest in his efforts after perfection or not.

We read of our blessed Father Ignatius that he ever maintained an extreme silence about the faults of those in the house. If anyone did anything that was not so very edifying, he discovered it to no one but to him who had to remedy it; and then with so much circumspection and reserve and regard for the good name of the offender that, if to reform him it were requisite only for one person to know it, he never would tell two. Hence we should learn how to speak of our brethren. If our Father, being superior and having it in his power to tell and rebuke the faults of those in the house in presence of all in punishment of them, proceeded with so much caution, and that even in regard of faults small and inconsiderable, with how much more reason should we so proceed!

St. Bonaventure gives this rule for speaking of the absent: "You should speak of the absent as you would if he was present; and that which you would not dare to say to his face or within his hearing you should not say behind his back"—*Erubescant dicere de absente quod cum caritate non possent dicere coram ipso*. Let everyone know that his



shoulders are safe with you; and that rule embraces grave matters as also those that appear light, which are what often deceive us, since many times they are not so light as they appear at the moment, as has been said. And so we must not excuse ourselves on that ground, nor by saying that others think nothing of these things, nor by saying that they are public. So our Father taught us, he who never mentioned in his conversations other people's vices, even though they were public and were the talk of the town, and he wished us to act in the same way. In our mouth let all pass for good, virtuous, and honorable men; and let all the world understand that no man shall lose anything or be less looked up to for anything that we say.

When by chance you have come to know or have heard of any fault, observe what the Wise Man says: *Hast thou heard or known of any fault of thy neighbor? Let it die within thee, bury it there; let it end there and go not out: it will not burst thee* (Ecclus. xix. 10). The Holy Ghost alludes to those who have taken some venom or poison, and are in great anguish and nausea in their efforts to cast it out, and cannot without taking medicines and oils for that purpose, thinking that they shall burst if they do not cast it out. And the Wise Man there brings two other comparisons to declare the same. As the woman in labor is in great anguish and extremity of pain until she brings forth the child; or as, when they have lodged an arrow or barbed dart in the fleshy part of a bull, the bull never stops or rests until it gets it out, so the fool never stops or rests until he tells someone of the fault that he knows of his neighbor. Let us, then, not be of that number, but of the number of the discreet and wise, who have capacity and breadth of chest ample enough to shut up and bury these things and let them die and end there.

Our Father General Claude Aquaviva, in his "*Industriae ad Curandos Animi Morbos*," has a very pertinent chapter on detraction—it is Chapter XVII—and gives there a piece

of advice, that, when one has told a story to the disparagement of another, he should not retire to rest till he has first confessed it; for one thing, because it may possibly have amounted to a grievous sin, and easily may have, in which case it is not right for anyone to go to bed with that on his conscience, but we should always go to sleep as if we were going to die; and secondly, though the thing go not so far as that, yet this will serve for a remedy and preservative against your falling into the like fault again. And not only in this particular instance, but in all like cases which carry with them any doubts or stings of conscience, this advice will be profitable, and all the more as coming from our Father General.

## CHAPTER X

### *That We Should Not Lend Our Ears to Detractions*

THE blessed St. Bernard says: "Not only ought we to beware of saying what is objectionable, but also of giving ear to it, since a willing listener provokes the speaker, and also because it is a shameful and unseemly thing to give ear to matters evil and unseemly." The glorious St. Basil, speaking of the punishment to be meted out to the detractor and to him who listens to the detraction, says that both are to be isolated from the community. He gives them equal punishment, because if the one did not willingly listen, neither would the other find any attraction to tell the scandalous story.

Theologians on this matter of detraction raise the question whether in detraction hearer sins mortally as well as speaker. And they put some cases in which they answer in the affirmative, as when the hearer is the cause of the other's speaking ill of his neighbor, moving him thereto or asking questions about it; or when he welcomes the detraction because he is not on good terms with the party in question; or when he sees that the detraction is doing notable

damage to his neighbor and could break it off; because then charity obliges him to help his neighbor in this necessity. Thus, as not only he does evil who sets fire to a house, but he also who stands warming himself at the fire which the other has kindled, where he ought to come to the rescue with water to put it out; so not only he sins who acts the detractor, but he also who could and ought to stop the detraction and does not, nay, even perhaps by the look of interest that he shows gives occasion to the detractor to go on with the detraction. At other times they say that it will be only a venial sin not to resist, as one dares not say anything or meddle in the matter out of some feeling of shyness on account of the speakers' being persons of authority. Here they notice a thing which much concerns us religious. It is that, when he who hears the detraction is a person who has authority over them that are speaking, such a one is more strictly bound to resist and stand up for the honor of his neighbor; and the more so, the greater his authority. This is what the theologians say.

Hence we may gather how we ought to behave when we find ourselves in such conversations, and the danger there may be in dissembling and being silent and letting the matter pass, through our pusillanimity and want of mortification. And since for our sins so common is this habit of detraction in our day that people in the world can hardly carry on a conversation without discussing other people's lives, and we have so much dealing with them, scruples fail not to offer themselves in this matter. "Could I have stopped it and did not stop it? Was I in any way the occasion of that conversation's being carried on? Did I ask any question or show interest in hearing it, putting on a pleasant countenance at what was said or condescending to it?" And scruples apart—because here one may say that he knows very well how far to go, and when it is a sin and when not—let us always go on this principle, that we are speaking now to religious, and persons who aim at virtue and perfection, and want not merely to keep out of sin, mor-

tal and venial, but ever to do the better thing, the more edifying thing, the thing that will be of greater profit to our neighbor. This being supposed, if ever we find ourselves in a conversation where detraction is going on, and we are silent out of pure shyness, pusillanimity, and lack of mortification, and let the matter pass and consent to it, since silence gives consent, what impression are they to gather but to confirm themselves more in what they are doing, seeing that a learned religious and servant of God, a man of authority among them, lets the matter pass and says nothing? They will say: "This can't be a sin, since the father is silent." And if they thought it were a sin, and did it before your face, they would do dishonor to you and your order, daring to say in your presence what is evil and sinful, and you not daring to contradict, not having virtue and fortitude enough for that.

St. Augustine, to meet this pest of detraction, had written in his dining room these verses:

*Quisquis amat dictis absentum rodere vitam,  
Hanc mensam vetitam noverit esse sibi.*

*Hence, hence be gone, detracting tongue,  
That dost the absent's honor wrong!  
This table only those admits  
Who innocently use their wits.*

And it is told how once, when some bishops, friends of his, were dining with him and were beginning to let their tongues loose and speak ill of other people's lives, he rebuked them forthwith and said that if they did not cease their evil speech, he must either erase those verses or rise from the table. That is the saying of a man of courage: "Sir, I shall leave the company unless you stop talking scandal." St. Jerome says the same: "If you hear a detractor, fly from him as from a serpent and leave him." "But oh, how he will be hurt!" "Do it all the more on that account," says St. Jerome, "that the hurt may teach him



to hold his tongue about other people's lives." Leave him, then, with the word stuck in his mouth, that he may be ashamed of himself and learn how to speak becomingly another time. This is a good plan for us to adopt, either to bid them stop talking scandal or leave the company.

When this plan cannot be carried out, as seeming rude or incompatible with the high credit of the speakers, the saints give another plan, easier and gentler, which is to show a severe countenance at what is said, so as to give the speaker to understand: "That language does not seem to me right, and I don't like to hear it." This plan is given us by the Holy Spirit through the Wise Man. *The north wind scatters the rain clouds, and a severe look the detracting tongue* (Prov xxv. 23). And in another place: *Hedge thine ears with thorns, when thou hearest a detractor* (Ecclus. xxviii. 28). These are the thorns with which we are to hedge our ears—this unpleasant look, this frown and gloom which you show in your face when another takes to backbiting, are the thorns that prick the speaker and make him feel compunction and bethink himself that he is doing wrong in speaking of the lives of others. The Wise Man is not satisfied that you should stop your ears with cotton, or any other soft material, but with thorns, that not only the evil speech may not gain entrance there and you be pleased at hearing it, but that they may prick the heart and conscience of the detractor, and he may correct and amend himself: *By severity and gravity in the look of the face the soul of him that is sinning is corrected* (Eccles. vii. 4), and thereby he comes to understand and bethink himself that he is doing wrong. We read of our blessed Father Ignatius that he made frequent use of this expedient. It happened sometimes, when Ours were in his company, that someone thoughtlessly let drop a word that did not seem to our Father much to the point or well said, and at once he drew himself up and put on an air that was somewhat severe, so that from the mere look of him the

fathers knew that there had been a fault, and the person whose thoughtlessness was to blame stood abashed and corrected. This he did often in things that seemed very slight and trivial, the fault of which, for being so small, escaped the sight of others and was overlooked by them; for he was not content with being always composed and master of himself, but wished his sons to be so too.

It is also a good expedient in this case to change the conversation and bring in other topics to cut the thread of what is being discussed. And to this end it is not necessary to wait for many opportunities or to come in quite *à propos*; rather it is most *à propos* to come in quite *mal à propos*, for so the speaker will understand, and the company, that they were not on a good subject, and that you did him honor in not rebuking him more clearly and putting him to shame before all; whereas if you hold back, waiting for favorable conjunctures and apt opportunities and the end of the conversation, neither would he understand the device nor you remedy the mischief. As when in a bullfight the bull makes for a man, they throw him a cloak that he may get entangled in that and leave the man; so, when one person is making for another and taking away his character, it is a very good expedient to throw him a cloak in the shape of another subject of conversation, that he may get involved in that and stop backbiting. And as to the man who threw the cloak the credit of having saved a life is gratefully given, so to him who changed the subject and stopped the backbiting credit is allowed and is due for the honor and good name that he has defended.

## CHAPTER XI

*That We Must Beware of All Manner of Lies*

**B**EFORE all, let true speech go before thee, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. xxxvii. 20). Before all, always speak the truth and never tell a lie. One would think it were not necessary much to commend this to religious, since it carries its own commendation. Even in the world they reckon it a great vice to be given to lying, and to call one a liar is a great insult; what should it be here in religion, where far more esteem and good opinion is lost by such a vice than there in the world? It is easy to see what a base and foul thing it is, and how unworthy of a religious. And much further should he be from lying to excuse himself and cover his fault. Far indeed is he from mortification and humility who tells a lie that his fault may not be known nor his reputation diminished. We should go out of our way to seek occasions of humiliation and mortification; and do you fly from those that come in your way of themselves, occasions that you cannot avoid without sin? That would be a great renunciation of the perfection which we profess. For the salvation of the whole world, so theologians and saints say, it would not be lawful to tell one lie; see if it would be lawful to tell one to escape the shame of failure in some trifling matter. Of seven things that God abhors, according to the Wise Man, the second is a *lying tongue* (Prov. vi. 17).

Another way of telling a lie, though not in such set terms, is when we tell a story "with advantages," putting in more than was true. Truth is one and indivisible; so anything that is added to it beyond the facts or beyond the knowledge of the speaker will be a lie. And of this there is commonly much danger, because we like it to appear that there is something in what we say and so seek to make the most of the story. Here we should proceed with much cau-

tion. St. Bonaventure says further that we should avoid amplifications and exaggerations, since it is not in accordance with religious gravity and modesty to exaggerate things. It should be your veracity and gravity that gives authority to what you say, not superfluous words and exaggerations; for these, so far from giving authority to what you say, make you lose the authority you had. The reason why the use of highly figurative and exaggerated language is a loss to the credit and authority of the speaker is that in such frequent exaggerations there comes to be a lie in the statement. It was not such a big thing as that. So men prone to exaggeration are not generally held to be very truthful, and lose credit and authority. It is told of our blessed Father Ignatius that he hardly ever employed what are called in Latin superlative nouns, because in them there is a lurking danger of sometimes overstating things beyond the fact, but said and told things simply and plainly without amplification or exaggeration. And so far was he from overstatements and exaggerations that it is said of him that even the things that he did know he did not strongly affirm. This is a common lesson given us on this subject by the saints. The glorious Bernard says: "Never affirm or deny with unmeasured asseveration and certitude that you know, but speak always with a little salt and grace of some doubt, saying for instance, 'I think it is so,' or 'If I am not mistaken, it is so,' 'I fancy I have heard it said.'" If this can be done discreetly, it is a modest mode of speech, humble and religious, and showing a man not too self-reliant, nor self-opinionated—a thing impossible to a humble man. The saints spoke in this way, since they were very humble and distrustful of self. Surius relates of St. Dominic Loricatus that, if anyone asked him what o'clock it was, he never answered flatly "eight" or "nine," but "about eight," or "about nine." And being asked why he answered in that way, he answered: "Because in that way I am sure of not telling a lie; now it may have struck the



hour, now it may be still to strike." This is another reason why it is part of religious prudence and modesty not to affirm things strongly "without a little salt and savor of some doubt," as St. Bernard says, because in that way you escape the danger of telling a lie, even though the thing should turn out to be otherwise than as you say. But when people make affirmations absolutely with much decision and asseveration, and afterwards it turns out not to be so, as does sometimes happen, they are annoyed with themselves afterwards for having told a lie and so strongly affirmed it for certain. And besides it disedifies the hearer when he finds that things are not so. I say this about things that we take for certain, because if I affirm a thing absolutely when I am in doubt about it, it is a lie still, even though it turns out to be true, because I speak beyond my knowledge; or at least I put myself in manifest danger of what I say being a lie, which comes to the same thing.

St. Bonaventure says further, you must not only always speak the truth, but speak it plainly and simply, without double-meaning and without equivocal words that may bear more than one sense, because that is a thing very foreign to religious straightforwardness and simplicity; and St. Augustine adds that such manner of speaking is lying. There are people who do not want to lie and do not want to speak the truth either, but use circumlocutions and equivocations that you may understand one thing while they understand another. In a grave case it is lawful to use equivocal speech, to conceal something which it is proper to conceal; but in ordinary conversation it is not lawful, but is a vicious habit of men who are double-dealers and insincere; and so it is clean contrary to the purity and simplicity, not only of religious, but even of Christian and social life, because it stands in the way of fidelity in the dealings and intercourse of men one with another—neither more nor less than downright lying, for it is certain that if such language were ordinarily lawful men would not dare to trust

one another. And so experience teaches us that, when we know of any persons that they are addicted to this vice, though in other respects they be virtuous men, their acquaintance do not dare to trust them, but treat them with reserve and fear of being deceived. So says the Wise Man: *He who speaketh sophistically, is a hateful person* (Ecclus. xxxvii. 23). Then let not that be said of you which we hear said of some people: "John is far from telling a lie and equally far from speaking the truth."

## CHAPTER XII

### *That We Should Beware of Jocose and Ridiculous Expressions, and Saying Smart and Witty Things*

THE blessed St. Basil says: "Beware of jocose and ridiculous expressions, of words of buffoonery, of going about frisking and playing the fool, because these are the amusements of children, and he who is aiming at perfection ought in conscience to give up being a child and play the man." The saint goes on to say that these fooleries and amusements make one remiss and negligent in the things of the service of God and banish devotion and compunction of heart. Especially, he says, one should beware of saying witty and facetious things, because that means turning oneself into a merry-andrew and a mountebank—a thing most unworthy of anyone aiming at perfection. St. Bernard treats this point very seriously: "Among seculars, nonsense is nonsense; in the mouth of a priest"—and of a religious—"it is blasphemy. You have consecrated your mouth to the Gospel. To open it to such nonsensical things is unlawful; to accustom it to them a sacrilege—as it would be to turn to profane uses a temple consecrated to God"—*Inter saeculares nugae sunt, in ore sacerdotis blasphemiae. The lips of a priest shall keep wisdom, and they shall seek the law from his mouth* (Mal. ii. 7), certainly

not nonsense, idle stories and buffooneries. Not content with a religious' being far from uttering such words, St. Bernard would have him also be far from listening to them and taking pleasure in them. *Verbum scurrille, quod faceti urbanive nomine colorant, non sufficit peregrinari ab ore; procul et ab aure relegandum est.* Scurrility, though some people call it facetiousness or wit, is to be banished from our hearing. When others say such things in our presence, he would have us behave as when we hear detraction, making it a point to interrupt the speaker and change the conversation with some profitable remark, and showing a severe countenance. If we should blush to hear such things and to have them said in our presence, what must it be to say them ourselves? "It is an unseemly thing," he says, "to burst out laughing, still more unseemly to move others to loud laughter" over such things. *Foede ad cachinnos moveris, foedius moves.* Clement of Alexandria, who was Origen's master, says, with St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure: "Since all words proceed from the thought and character of the speaker, it is impossible for ridiculous speeches to be uttered without their proceeding from an equally ridiculous character." *From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh* (Matt. xii. 34). Thus he who utters vain and frivolous words shows the vanity and frivolity of his heart. As from the sound you can tell whether a bell or vessel is sound or cracked, full or empty; so from the voice and tone of the words it is easy to see at once that the interior is full or empty, sound or cracked. He who says these things in conversation sounds empty. On the text: *Let no evil speech come forth from your mouth* (Eph. v. 4), St. Chrysostom observes: "As each one's heart is, so are the words that he utters and the deeds that he does."

The holy martyr Ignatius in the midst of his torments kept repeating time after time the name of Jesus and, being asked the reason, replied: "Because I have it written in my heart and therefore cannot help often repeating it." And

when he was dead, they took out his heart and divided it and they found in every part the name of Jesus written in letters of gold. He who says witty and facetious things has not the name of Jesus written on his heart, but the world and its vanity, and that is what springs from his mouth. Thus we see that men who pride themselves on saying witty things and making others laugh with their facetious sayings are not only not spiritual men, but are not good religious.

Father Master Avila interpreted to this effect the saying of the Apostle: *Scurrility, that is not to the point* (Eph. v. 4). Witty speeches and buffooneries, he said, are not only not in keeping with religious modesty, but not even with the gravity and practice of Christian life. And we read in his life that no witticism was ever found in his mouth. And of St. John Chrysostom, Metaphrastes relates that he never said funny things, nor consented to others' saying them. The ancient Fathers made such a point of this, that the penance which St. Basil enjoined on anyone who spoke such words was separation from the community for a week. That was a sort of excommunication that the monks practised, separating such people from conversation and intercourse with the rest of the religious, that they might not infect them nor give them the itch, and that they might be ashamed of themselves and understand that he does not deserve to be among the rest of the religious who does not converse and talk like a religious.

In the Life of St. Hugh, Abbot of Cluny, Surius tells of an archbishop of Toulouse, named Duranus, who was fond of hearing and saying witty things and idle words. St. Hugh rebuked him sundry times, as he had been once a monk of his monastery, telling him that if he did not amend he would have special purgatory on that account. The archbishop died a few days afterwards, and appeared to a monk named Siguin, and showed his face much swollen and his lips full of sores, and begged him with tears to ask



Hugh's prayers for him, for that he suffered cruel torment in purgatory for his witticisms and idle words, of which he had not corrected himself. Siguin related this to the holy Abbot Hugh, who commanded seven monks to keep silence for seven days in satisfaction for this fault. Of these, one broke silence. The archbishop appeared to Siguin and complained that his cure was delayed for that monk's disobedience. Siguin carried this to Hugh, who found that it was true and enjoined another monk to keep silence for seven days, at the end of which the archbishop appeared for the third time and thanked the abbot and his monks. He showed himself in his pontifical robes, with his face healthy and very cheerful, and thereupon disappeared.

Especially it should be observed here that we ought to beware of stinging pleasantries—little words uttered sometimes in fun, and taken for wit, but apt to wound another, because covertly they reflect on his birth or on his understanding and somewhat dull wit or other defect. These pleasantries are more grievous and evil than those mentioned above, inasmuch as they are often offensive to persons, and that all the more, the funnier they are, since they make a more lasting impression on the hearers and stick in their memory more. Even there in the world, where funny men, whom they call wags, know how to do this without personal offense or hurting anyone's feelings, they go down and are reckoned good company among men in the world, and they say of them: "He is a wag, but after all his droll sayings do not hurt anyone." But when they sting with their sarcasm, they are greatly disliked, and generally even come to an ill end, because there does not fail to be someone to give them their due. But of this and other manners of speech contrary to fraternal charity, we have spoken in the Fourth Treatise.

## CHAPTER XIII

*That Our Talk and Conversations Ought to Be of God,  
and of Some Means to Make Them So*

**L**ET no evil word come from your mouth, says the Apostle (Eph. iv. 29), *but let all your conversation be ever of good things, things of edification and profit for the hearers*, apt to kindle and set them on fire with the love of God and the desire of virtue and perfection. This is a thing very necessary for us, since it is our end and institute not only to attend to our own spiritual progress, but also to that of our neighbor; and talk and conversations of this sort are one of the things that greatly edify those with whom we deal and does them much good. Besides the profit that these conversations carry with them, there is this, that people of the world, seeing that our conversation is always on these subjects, conceive a high idea and great respect for us, understanding him to be full of God who never converses with them except of God, and thus our ministrations in their regard are apt to be of great effect. Of Father Francis Xavier it is read in his Life that he did more good by his private conversations than by his sermons. And our Father in his Constitutions, treating of the means which they of the Society have to aid their neighbor, sets down this for one of the chief, and lays it down for a general rule that they of the Society are to be careful to make use of it, even the lay brothers.

That we may know how and be able to do this better, it will help us much, in the first place, to be accustomed here amongst ourselves to speak of good and spiritual things. We read of the blessed St. Francis that he made his religious often sit down by themselves to talk of the things of God, that they might be trained to this language and style of conversation when they should be in the company of seculars. And it is related there that once, when they were

engaged in this holy conversation, the Lord appeared in the midst of them in the shape of a most beautiful youth and gave them His blessing, letting them understand how these conversations pleased Him. And in the Society there is this practice in the novitiate of often bringing the novices together to talk to one another of spiritual things; and all our life afterwards we are wont to have frequent spiritual conferences amongst ourselves in order to gain dexterity in this language; and besides it is much commended to us in our ordinary conversations.

St. Bernard in this matter gives a very good and grave reprehension to certain religious of his time, putting before them what was the custom in the golden age. "Oh, how far off we are," he says, "from those monks that were in the time of St. Anthony and of St. Paul, the first hermit! When they met together and visited one another, all their conversation was of heaven, and they took with such avidity and hunger this food of the soul, speaking and treating of God and of the profit of their souls, that they forgot their bodily food and often went whole days fasting in this occupation. And that was a good order, since they served first the more leading and worthier part of themselves, which is the soul. But nowadays when we meet, there is none who asks for or distributes this spiritual and heavenly food, none who is wont in visits and conversations to speak of the Holy Scriptures or of what concerns the salvation of souls, but it is all laughing, joking, and words that the wind carries away. And the worst of it is," says the saint, "the knowing how to entertain one another in this way is called affability and discretion, and the contrary is called dryness, rudeness, and rusticity; and those who speak of God are held up for melancholy persons, and their company is shunned. This charity is the ruin of true charity, and this discretion the ruin of true discretion. For what charity is it to love the flesh and despise the spirit? And what discretion is it to give all to the body and nothing to the soul?

To feed the body full and starve the soul is not discretion nor charity, but cruelty and a great breach of due order." Tauler, a grave doctor, relates that the Lord once appeared to a great servant of His and told him with great emotion of six complaints that He had against His servants; whereof the second was that in their meetings and conversations they spoke of vain and pointless things, while as for Himself, none took His name in his mouth. Let us, then, take care that the Lord may not bring this complaint against us and may not be able to give us this reprehension.

St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure give another good means for always speaking of edifying things. It is that, when we go out to converse with our neighbor, we should have ready certain good and profitable things to say to them; and when they speak of idle and vain things, we should promptly put in things of edification to cut short and change the conversation, of which point our rules admonish us. And it is not much to ask that we who are religious should take this means to keep up talk and conversation about God, so proper to our vocation, since we see that people in the world do the same to keep up their worldly talk and conversation. In this we should show good understanding and discretion, and dexterity in setting bounds to and cutting short conversations not to the point, and bringing in the things of God.

A third thing that will help us much herein is a great love of God and great affection for spiritual things; because in this way we shall feel no weariness or disgust in speaking of God or hearing Him spoken of, but rather we shall take much delight therein; since it is no burden, but on the contrary a pleasure and delight for anyone to speak of that which he loves and has at heart. Else see with what hearty good will the tradesman speaks of his bargains and business. In season and out of season, at all times, he is glad to hear of a good opening for buying and selling. The farmer speaks readily enough of his tillage and crops, the shepherd of his calves and lambs. *He who guideth the*



*plough and glorieth in wielding the goad, will diligently urge on his oxen, and his whole occupation is his work in the fields, and his talk is of breeds of bulls* (Ecclus. xxxviii. 26). Every man willingly talks of what is to him matter of business. So also with us, who have left the world and are aiming at perfection, if we have a great love of God and affection for spiritual things, all our joy and recreation will be to speak of those things and we shall not want matter of conversation. Thus it is a very good sign when one has a taste for speaking and talking about God, and a bad sign when one has it not, according to what St. John says: *They are of the world, and therefore they talk of the things of the world* (I John iv. 5).

St. Augustine, on those words of the Wise Man: *Thou hast fed them with the food of angels, and hast given them bread from heaven, prepared with no labor of theirs, having in itself all that is delicious and the sweetness of all tastes* (Wisdom xvi. 20), says that this manna from heaven, with which God nourished the children of Israel in the desert, had to each one the taste that he wished, according to the above words; but that, he goes on to say, must be understood only of the good, for to the wicked it had not the taste that they wished, otherwise they would not have asked and longed for other food, as they did ask and long for it. To these, not only did the manna not have the taste of all things desirable, but they came in time to be disgusted with it and cloyed with it, and they sighed after the flesh meat and remembered the fleshpots of Egypt, the cucumbers and melons and leeks and onions and garlic that they ate there; that they desired and longed for in preference. But the good were quite satisfied with the manna, and had no desire of other food nor memory of it, because in the manna they found all the tastes that they wished. Now this is the difference between good and perfect religious and the tepid and imperfect, that good religious have a great taste for spiritual things and the things of God

and of speaking and talking of them, and they find in that manna all good tastes. God has for them the taste of all they desire, and they say with St. Augustine and St. Francis, *My God and my all*. God is all things to them, and they find in Him all that they desire. But to the tepid and imperfect this divine manna has not the taste of all things; but it disgusts them, and they reject it and rejoice rather in hearing of a story than of a matter of edification, which is not a good sign.

“Happy the tongue,” says St. Jerome, “that can speak only of God.” And St. Basil says: “To the true servant of God all vain and useless conversations are an annoyance; and conversations and talks about God are sweeter and more delicious than honey.” Hence it is that a soul that is much drawn to God, when she feels the want of virtuous recreation and some means of forgetting her labors and infirmities, has no need to distract herself with talks and conversations about idle and ridiculous things, for as she loves not those things, so they go rather to increase her pain and affliction. What consoles her and gives her relief is talking and hearing others talk of what she loves and desires. So we read of St. Catharine of Siena that she was never tired of speaking about God; rather it was her recreation and the means to increase her health and vigor and make her forget her infirmities and labors. And we read the same of many other saints.

#### CHAPTER XIV

*Of Another Chief Reason Making It Highly Befitting  
that Our Talks and Conversations with Our  
Neighbors Should Be about God*

NOT only for the edification and advancement of our neighbor is it necessary that our talks and conversations should be of God, but for our own advancement and

preservation also, that by such speaking of God we may kindle and inflame our hearts with His love. Such is the proper effect of the like conversations, as we see in those two disciples that on the way to the castle of Emmaus were speaking of these things. *Was not our heart on fire and burning?* (Luke xxiv. 32). And it is our own experience sometimes that we come forth from some of these conversations more moved and devout than from sermons. Surius relates of St. Thomas Aquinas that his talks and conversations with all were of holy things, and things profitable for the salvation of souls, and that was one of the reasons why, after speaking and dealing with men, he could readily recollect himself for prayer and meditation on divine things, because, as his conversations were on the things of God and his words were spoken with consideration, they did not distract or hinder him from prayer.

Of our Father Francis Xavier, one of the things most worthy of admiration related in his Life is the way he contrived to unite business and the seeing of many people with prayer. Applying himself as he did to many things, and being taken up with important affairs, and traveling continually by land and by sea among so many labors and dangers, and being so polite and courteous in his intercourse with all, nevertheless he ever led an interior life in the presence of God, and so, holding himself aloof from business and intercourse with his neighbor, he entered very easily and readily straightway into meditation and familiar dealing with his heavenly Spouse. And there is the explanation—that, as the occupation had not distracted him, it was easy for him to return to what he had never left. Contrariwise, if our dealings and words and conversations are not of God, we run much risk. Our blessed Father Ignatius used to say that, as familiar dealings and conversation with our neighbor are of much fruit and edification to him and very proper to the Society if it be done as it ought, so on the other hand, if we do not know how to converse as we

ought, it will be very disedifying to him and very dangerous to ourselves. St. Bernard says: "Idle words easily defile the heart, and when we enjoy hearing and speaking of a thing, we are very near to doing it."

It is true that sometimes in talks and conversations with our neighbor it is necessary to go in at his door; but, as our Father says, that must only be to come out by our own. They should not carry us away so that we should go in by their door and come out by the same; but we must come out always by our own, drawing them to us and to God by profitable and edifying conversation. And for this there is no need to observe ever so many points and ever so many circumstances and conjunctures. If you are so particular about that, you will never come out by your own door, and they will remain by theirs. Let all understand that we are religious, and that this is our business, and that in dealing with us they must not waste time nor talk of useless things, but that we must speak of God and of things profitable to salvation. If they do not want that, let them not come to talk to us. And so we read of our Father that, if he received a visit from any idle man with whom he was likely to waste much time and do no good, after having given him a pleasant reception once or twice, if he continued his visits without profit, our Father would begin to speak to him about death, judgment, and hell; for, he said, if the man had no liking for such conversation, he would get tired and not return any more; while if he had a liking for them, he would gather some spiritual fruit for his soul.

St. Augustine in confirmation of this says: It is true we must endeavor to accommodate ourselves to all in order to gain all, as did St. Paul—I *became all things to all* (I Cor. ix. 22), I became sorrowful with the sorrowful—because it is a great comfort to one in sorrow to see that another is sorrowful too and feels his distress, while we show joy with one in joy; but this accommodating of ourselves to our neighbor and putting ourselves in his place must be done



in such a way as to alleviate his distress and raise and draw him out of his misery without ourselves' falling into the like misery: *sic tamen ut ad auxilium, non ad aequalitatem miseriae valeat*. And he illustrates this by a good comparison. As one wishing to lend a hand to another that has fallen, to get him up again, is careful not to throw himself on the ground nor let himself fall as the other is fallen, but plants his foot and stands firm that the other may not drag him down, stooping just a little so far as is necessary to help him; so in this way we must accommodate ourselves to seculars and make ourselves one of their set, lowering ourselves and showing that we too are human in some little way, going in at their door to win them over; at the same time always standing fast and resting well on our supports that they may not drag us over, but we may come off with our own.

And let us persuade ourselves of this truth, that one of the things that particularly edifies those with whom we come in contact is to see that our conversation is always of good and profitable things; and though some at the beginning apparently have no taste for that, afterwards on reflection they are edified and have a better opinion and esteem of us, for after all they acknowledge that that is the main thing in life. On the other hand, if they see that we go in and come out with them in their worldly conversations and that we have the same tastes in those matters as they have, possibly they may take us for friends as they would take any other man of the world, but not for spiritual men, and so will be lost our authority and influence for doing any good in their souls. Let it be our aim, then, in this matter to hold up the good name of our order and the example of our fathers of old. Of our Father Francis Borgia we read that, if he received a visit from secular persons from whom he could make no bodily escape, and they brought in topics of conversation not to the point, he paid no attention to their talk, but kept his heart and spirit fixed

on God. Some fathers admonished him that he made mistakes in this way and sometimes said things that had nothing to do with the matter on hand. He replied that he had rather be taken for a silly man than lose his time, since he counted all the time lost that was not employed in God and for God. This is in accordance with what Cassian recounts of the Abbot Machetus, who by long prayers had obtained of our Lord this favor, that in spiritual conversations and conferences at any hour of the day or night he never slept; but if any idle and useless topic were brought in, off he went to sleep immediately.

Let us conclude with a general recommendation that St. Bernard gave to a religious: "Let him so behave in all things as to edify those who see him, so that none that sees or hears him can doubt but that he is a monk indeed." Which is what the Apostle says, writing to his disciple Titus: *In all things show thyself a pattern of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity, a sound word beyond reproach, that any adversary may be confounded, finding nothing evil to say of us* (Tit. ii. 7-8).

Let us endeavor to give good example and edification all round, that not our friends alone may have something on which to dwell with satisfaction, but those who are jealous of us may be confounded and ashamed, seeing they find nothing to say against us or lay hold of to censure.

It is related of a philosopher that, when someone told him they were telling stories about him to take away his character, he answered: "I will live in such a way that no one shall believe people who tell stories to my discredit." That is how we should live, taking care not only to let nothing appear in our words and actions worthy of reprehension, but that our life and behavior shall be such as to take away all credit from any who may calumniate us. That is the best way to meet these story-tellers, to be silent with our mouth, and answer by our deeds.

## ELEVENTH TREATISE

## ON HUMILITY







## CHAPTER I

### *Of the Excellence of the Virtue of Humility, and the Need We Have of It*

**L**EARN of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, says Jesus Christ our Redeemer, and ye shall find rest to your souls (Matt. xi. 29). The blessed St. Augustine says: "The whole life of Christ on earth was a lesson to us, and He was master of all virtues, but especially of humility; it was that particularly which He wished us to learn of Him." That were enough for us to understand how great must be the excellence of this virtue and how great the need that we have of it, since the Son of God came down from heaven to earth to teach it to us and wished to be our special instructor therein, not in word alone, but much more particularly in work, since all His life was an example and living pattern of humility. The glorious St. Basil goes through the whole life of Christ from His birth, showing and reflecting how all His actions teach us particularly this virtue. He chose, he says, to be born of a poor mother, in a poor stable and in a manger, and to be wrapped in poor swaddling clothes. He chose to be circumcised as a sinner, to fly into Egypt as too weak to protect Himself, to be baptized among sinners and publicans as though He were one of them. Afterwards in the course of His life, when they sought to honor and exalt Him for king, He hid Himself; and when they sought to outrage and dishonor Him, then He put Himself in their power. When men and even those possessed by devils would extol Him, He bade them be silent; and when they mocked Him, uttering injurious words, He said nothing. And at the end of His life, to leave us a further commendation of this virtue, as His last will and testament, He confirmed it by that mar-

velous example of washing His disciples' feet, and that so ignominious death on the Cross.

St. Bernard says: "The Son of God abased and reduced Himself by taking human nature; and all His life He strove to be a pattern of humility, to teach us by deed what He had to teach us by word. Marvelous manner of teaching!" But why, Lord, is so great a majesty so humbled? *Ut non apponat ultra magnificare se homo super terram* (Psalm ix. 18)—"That from this time forth there may be no man daring to be proud and lift himself up upon the earth." It was always folly and impudence for man to be proud; but particularly now that the Majesty of God has abased and humbled Himself, says St. Bernard, "it is shamelessness intolerable and gross vulgarity for a vile worm of a man to seek to be regarded and esteemed. The Son of God, equal to His Father, takes the form of a servant and chooses to be humbled and treated with ignominy; and do I, dust and ashes, seek to be regarded and esteemed?"

With good reason does the Redeemer of the world say that He is the master of this virtue, and that we must learn it of Him; for this virtue of humility is one which neither Plato nor Socrates nor Aristotle knew how to teach. While they treated of other virtues, as fortitude, temperance, and justice, the heathen philosophers were so far from being humble that in these very acts and in all their virtues their aim was to be well thought of and bequeath a memory of themselves to posterity. A Diogenes and others like him spoke well, inasmuch as they showed themselves despisers of the world and of themselves, in poor clothes, in poverty, and in abstinence; but in the very act of doing that they showed great pride, seeking by that means to be admired and esteemed, while they despised others, as Plato shrewdly observed to Diogenes. One day Plato invited sundry philosophers, and among them Diogenes, to dinner. He had his house well decked out, his carpets laid down, and much other preparation, as befitted the

dignity of such guests. Diogenes, on coming in, began trampling with his dirty feet on those carpets. Plato said to him: "What are you about?" He said: "I am trampling on and bringing down the pomp and pride of Plato." Plato answered very well: "So you are, but with other pride;" meaning that he was showing more pride in trampling on his carpets than himself in keeping such furniture. Those philosophers did not attain to true contempt of themselves, in which Christian humility consists. They did not even know the virtue of humility so much as by name; it is our peculiar virtue taught by Christ.

St. Augustine remarks that hereby began that masterful Sermon on the Mount: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. v. 3). St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and other saints say that by poor in spirit is to be understood the humble. By this the Redeemer of the world began His preaching, by this He went on with it, by this He concluded it; this He taught us all His life long, this He wished us to learn of Him. St. Augustine says: "He did not say, learn of Me to make heaven and earth, learn of Me to do wonders and miracles, to heal the sick, cast out devils, to raise the dead, but, learn of Me to be meek and humble of heart." Better the humble man who serves God than the man who works miracles. This is the plain and sure way; the other is full of pitfalls and dangers.

The need that we have of this virtue is so great that without it it is impossible to take one step in the service of God. The glorious St. Augustine says: "All our works must be guarded and accompanied by humility in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end; for if we are ever so little careless and allow vain complacency to come in, all will be carried away by the wind of pride." Little will it profit us that the work in itself be good; rather on that account we have greater reason to fear the vice of pride and vainglory; since other vices are concerned with sin and evil things—envy, anger, lust—and so carry on them a

label bidding us beware of them, but pride goes after good works to destroy them. The man was prosperously under way with his heart set on heaven, since at starting he had directed to God what he was doing; when suddenly there comes a squall of vanity and throws him on a rock; he desires to please men and be regarded and esteemed by them; he takes thereon some vain complacency, whereupon his bark founders entirely. So St. Gregory and St. Bernard say very well: "He who seeks to gain virtues without humility, is like one carrying a little dust or ashes in the teeth of the wind; it is all scattered, all blown away by the gale"—*Qui sine humilitate virtutes congregat, quasi in ventum pulverem portat.*

## CHAPTER II

### *That Humility Is the Foundation of All Virtues*

ST. CYPRIAN says: "Humility is the foundation of sanctity." St. Jerome: "The first virtue of Christians is humility." St. Bernard: "Humility is the foundation and safeguard of all virtues." St. Gregory in one place calls it "mistress and mother of all virtues," and in another says that it is the "root and origin of virtues." This metaphor and comparison of *root* is very proper and declares well the properties and conditions of humility. For in the first place, as the flower is supported by the root and withers when it is cut off from it, so whatever virtue there be, if it perseveres not on the root of humility, withers and is lost at once. Further, as the root is underground, and is trampled and trodden on, and has in itself no beauty nor scent, and yet from it the tree receives its life, so the humble man is buried, trodden upon, and made small account of, and makes no show of luster and splendor, but is cast into a corner and forgotten, and this it is that preserves him and makes him thrive. Further, as for the tree to grow and



last and bear much fruit, the root must strike deep, and the deeper it goes and the further it penetrates the earth, the more the tree will fructify and the longer it will last—*it will thrust its roots below, and bear fruit above*, as the Wise Man says (IV Kings xix. 30)—so the fertility and preservation of virtues lies in their casting deep roots of humility. The more humble you are, the more you will thrive and grow in virtue and perfection. Finally, as pride is the root and beginning of all sin, as the Wise Man says—*The beginning of all sin is pride* (Ecclus. x. 15)—so the saints say that humility is the root and foundation of all virtue.

But someone will say: "How can you say that humility is the foundation of all virtues and of the spiritual edifice, when the saints say in common that faith is the foundation, according to that saying of St. Paul: *Other foundation can no man lay but that which is laid already, which is Christ Jesus* (I Cor. iii. 11)?" To this St. Thomas very aptly replies: Two things are requisite to lay a foundation well. First it is necessary to open well the trenches and cast out all the loose earth until you arrive at firm ground to build it upon; and after having dug the trench deep and thrown out all the loose earth, they begin to lay the foundation upon stone, which, with the other stones that are laid upon it, makes the main foundation of the building. So, St. Thomas goes on to say, are humility and faith in the spiritual foundation and fabric of virtues. Humility is that which opens the ground; its office is to dig the trench deep, and throw out all the loose stuff, that is, the weakness of human strength. You must not build on your own strength, for that is all sand: all *that* you must cast out, having no confidence in yourself; you must go on digging until you arrive at the living rock and firm stone, which is Christ (I Cor. x. 4). That is the principal foundation; but to rest upon it the other is necessary, which is the work of humility. Thus humility is also called the foundation.

Humility, then, will open the trenches and immerge a man in the knowledge of himself and cast out all the loose earth of self-esteem and self-confidence, until it reaches the true foundation, which is Christ. Such a man will set up a good building; and though the winds buffet it, and the waters rise around it, it will not be upset, because it is founded on a firm rock. But if a man build without humility, his building will speedily fall, as being founded on sand.

They are not true, out apparent and false virtues, that are not founded on humility. Thus St. Augustine says, in those ancient Romans and philosophers there were no true virtues, not only for lack of charity, which is the form and vital principle of all, without which there is no true and perfect virtue, but also for lack of the foundation of humility. Their aim in their fortitude, their justice, their temperance, was to be esteemed and leave a good name behind them; their virtues were hollow and devoid of substance, a mere shadow of virtues. And being such, not true, but apparent, they were rewarded by God in the Romans with the goods of this life, which also are apparent goods. If, then, you wish to build up true virtues in your soul, endeavor first to lay a good foundation of humility.

St. Augustine says: "If you wish to be great and raise a high edifice of virtues, dig the foundations well. And the deeper the foundations must go, the higher one wishes to raise the building, for there is no height without depth. Thus in the measure and proportion in which you go down and cast the foundations of humility, the higher you will be able to raise this tower of evangelical perfection which you have begun. St. Thomas Aquinas, among other grave utterances which are quoted of his, says that whoever is motivated by a desire of honor, whoever shuns being made small account of and is grieved when that befalls him, even though he do wonders, is far from perfection, because all his virtue is destitute of foundation.

## CHAPTER III

*In Which It Is Shown More in Detail How Humility Is the  
Foundation of All Virtues, by Going Through  
the Chief of Them*

THE better to see how true is this pronouncement of the saints, that humility is the foundation of all virtues, and how necessary this foundation is for them all, we will run briefly through the more principal virtues. To begin with the theological, humility is necessary for faith. I leave out of count children, in whom faith is infused without act of theirs in baptism; I speak of grown-up people, who have the use of reason. Faith requires a humble and submissive understanding: *Taking our understanding captive to the obedience of faith*, says the Apostle St. Paul (II Cor. x. 5). A proud understanding is an impediment and obstacle to the reception of faith. So said Christ our Redeemer: *How can ye believe in me, since ye seek to be honored of one another, and seek not the honor that is of God alone?* (John v. 44). And not only for the reception of faith is humility necessary, but also for the preservation of it. It is the common doctrine of doctors and saints that pride is the beginning of all heresies. A man gets such a conceit of his own opinion and judgment that he prefers it to the common sentiment of saints and of the Church, and thence he comes to plunge into heresy. So says the Apostle: *Ye must know that in the latter days there will be dangerous times: men will be lovers of themselves, envious, haughty, proud* (II Tim. iii. 1). To elation and pride he ascribes errors and heresies, as does St. Augustine enlarging well on this point. Hope is sustained by humility, since the humble feels his own need and understands that he can do nothing of himself, and so the more heartily does he fall back upon God and puts all his hope in Him.

Charity and love of God is roused and kindled by humility, since the humble man recognizes that all that he has comes from the hand of God and that he is far from deserving it, and by that consideration he is greatly kindled and inflamed to the love of God. Holy Job said: *What is man, O Lord, that thou art mindful of him, and settest thy heart upon him*, and dost him so many favors and benefits? (vii. 13). I am so evil in dealing with Thee, and Thou art so good in dealing with me! I persist in offending Thee every day, and Thou dost me favors every hour! This is one of the principal motives whereby saints have aided themselves to kindle in their hearts a great love of God. The more they considered their unworthiness and misery, the more they found themselves bound to love God, Who deigned to look upon such a lowly estate as theirs. The most holy Queen of Angels said: *My soul doth magnify the Lord, because he hath cast his eyes on the lowliness of his hand-maid* (Luke i. 46, 48).

As for charity towards our neighbor, it is easy to see how necessary humility is for that, since one of the things that usually cool and diminish our love for our brethren is passing judgment upon their faults and holding them for imperfect and defective people. Now the humble man is far from that, since he keeps his eyes on his own faults, and in others sees nothing but their virtues. So he takes them all for good, and himself alone for evil and imperfect and unworthy of being in the company of his brethren; whence there springs in him an esteem and respect and great love for all. Further, the humble man is not aggrieved at all others' being preferred to him; at others' being made much of and himself forgotten; at others' having great charges entrusted to them and himself being entrusted only with mean and petty things. There is no envy among the humble, because envy springs from pride; thus where humility is, there will be no envies, no conflicts, nor anything to cool the love that should be among brethren.



Of humility also springs patience, so necessary in this life, since the humble man knows his faults and sins and sees himself deserving of any and every punishment, and no affliction comes upon him that he does not judge to be less than it ought to be, in accordance with his faults. Thus he is silent and knows not how to complain, but rather says with the Prophet Micheas: *Willingly will I bear the chastisement that God sendeth me, since I have sinned against him* (Mich. vii. 9). As the proud man complains of everything and thinks that they are wronging him, although they are doing no such thing, and that they never treat him as he deserves; so the humble man, though they do treat him unfairly, will not see it, nor takes it for unfairness. He never makes a grievance of anything that they do to him, but rather thinks that he is amply well set up; and whatever way they treat him, he thinks they are treating him better than he deserves. Humility is a great means to patience. So when the Wise Man is admonishing him who wishes to serve God to prepare for temptations and repugnances and to arm himself with patience, the means that he gives him thereto is humility: *Keep thy heart lowly and endure: all that happeneth to thee, though it be very contrary to thy liking and to sensuality, take it in good part, and though it hurt thee, suffer it* (Ecclus. ii. 2, 4). But how shall that be? In what armor dost thou clothe me that I may not feel it or that, whatever I already feel, I may bear well? *Have patience in thy humility*. Hold to humility, and thou shalt have patience.

Of humility is born peace, so desired of all and so necessary to the religious. So says Christ our Redeemer: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls* (Matt. xi. 29). Be humble, and you shall have great peace within yourself, and also with your brethren. As among the proud there are always bickerings, contentions, and quarrels, as the Wise Man says: *Among the proud there are always quarrels* (Prov. xiii.

10), so among the humble there cannot be any bickering or dispute, except that holy dispute and quarrel who shall take the lower place and how each may yield the preference to his neighbor. Such was the kindly contention between St. Paul and St. Anthony, who was to divide the loaf, each importuning the other, the one on the score of the other's being the guest, the other on that of his being the senior; each sought a plea to give the preference and yield the superiority to the other. These are good little tiffs and contentions, springing from true humility: such are not contrary to peace and fraternal charity, but rather confirm and preserve it the more.

Let us come to those three virtues which are proper and essential to the religious, the virtues to which we bind ourselves by the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Poverty has such a close connection and relationship with humility that they seem sisters of one bed. Thus by poverty of spirit, which Christ our Lord put for the first of the beatitudes, some saints understand humility, others voluntary poverty, such as religious profess. Poverty must always go accompanied by humility, for the one without the other is a dangerous thing. It is easy to engender a spirit of vainglory and pride of poor and mean clothes, and thence arises contempt of others. For this reason St. Augustine avoided very poor clothes, and wished his religious to go about dressed becomingly and decently, to escape this bad consequence. On the other hand, humility is equally necessary, that we may not seek to go well provided with everything and want nothing, but rather be content with what is given us, though it be of the worst, because we are poor men and profess poverty. How necessary humility is for the preservation of chastity, we have many examples in the histories of the Fathers of the Desert of foul and shameful falls in men who had done many years of penance and solitary life, all which came from

want of humility and from presumption and confidence in self, a sin which God is wont to punish by permitting the like falls. Humility is such a great ornament of chastity and virginal purity that St. Bernard says: "I venture to say that, without humility, even the virginity of our Lady would not have pleased God." Let us come to the virtue of obedience, in which our Father wished that we of the Society should signalize ourselves. It is clear that he cannot be very obedient who is not humble, nor he cease to be obedient who is humble. The humble man holds no judgment to the contrary, but conforms himself in all to that of the superior; thus in action as in will and judgment there is no contradiction or resistance.

To come now to prayer, which is the mainstay of the life of the religious and of the spiritual man, if it be not accompanied by humility, it is of no value, whereas prayer with humility pierces the heavens: *The prayer of him that humbleth himself*, says the Wise Man, *shall pierce the heavens, and shall not stop short till it reach the throne of the Most High, and not depart thence till it obtaineth of God all that it asketh* (Ecclus. xxxv. 21). That holy and humble Judith, shut up in her oratory, clad in sackcloth, covered with ashes, prostrate on the ground, spoke aloud and cried out: *The prayer of the humble and meek of heart hath ever been pleasing to thee, O Lord* (Judith ix. 16). *God hath regarded the prayer of the humble, and hath not despised their petitions* (Psalm ci. 18). *Have no fear of the humble being rejected or departing in confusion* (Psalm lxxiii. 21), he shall gain his request, and God will hear his prayer. See how pleased God was with that humble prayer of the publican in the Gospel, who dared not raise his eyes to heaven nor approach the altar, but in a far corner of the Temple smote his breast in humble acknowledgment and said: *Lord, be merciful to me, who am a great sinner* (Luke xviii. 13). *Of a truth I tell you*, says Christ our Redeemer, *that this man went home from the Temple justified*, while

the proud Pharisee, who took himself for a good man, went out condemned. In this way we might run through the rest of the virtues; so if you wish for a short cut to attain them all and a brief and compendious lesson how to come quickly to perfection, here it is—*Be humble.*

#### CHAPTER IV

#### *Of the Particular Need in Which They Stand of This Virtue, Whose Profession It Is to Help On the Salvation of Their Neighbor*

**T**HE greater thou art, humble thyself the more, in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God (Ecclus. iii. 20). We who profess to gain souls to God hold the office of great men—to our confusion we may say it; the Lord has called us to a very exalted state, since our institute is to serve holy Church in very high and lofty ministries, such as those to which God chose the apostles; namely, the preaching of the Gospel, the administration of the sacraments and of His own most Precious Blood: so that we can say with St. Paul: *He hath given us the ministry of reconciliation* (II Cor. v. 18). He calls the grace of preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments, whereby grace is imparted, “the ministry of reconciliation.” *He hath committed to us the preaching of reconciliation: we are ambassadors of Christ.* God has made us His ministers, His ambassadors, as it were His apostles, legates of the Sovereign Pontiff Jesus Christ. Our tongues are instruments of the Holy Ghost, *God Himself exhorting by our mouth* (II Cor. v. 19-20). Through us the Lord is pleased to speak to souls; through these tongues of flesh the Lord will move the hearts of men.

Now for this we have greater need than other men of the virtue of humility, for two reasons. First, because the more sublime our institute and the higher our vocation, the



greater is our danger and the stronger the assaults of pride and vanity. It is the higher mountains, says St. Jerome, that are the more wind-swept and buffeted by storms. We are engaged in very high ministrations and on that account are respected and esteemed by all the world; we are taken for saints and for new apostles on earth; it is understood that our business is all sanctity and the making of saints out of those with whom we deal. A good strong foundation of humility is necessary for so high a building not to crash down to the ground. Great strength and great stock of virtue is needed to bear the weight of honor and the occasions of sin that go with being honored; a hard thing it is to have honors showered on us as we walk without our heart's being in any way affected, and not all men's heads are strong enough to move in high places. Oh, how many have swooned and fallen from the high estate in which they once were, for want of this good grounding in humility! How many, who seemed eagles soaring aloft in the practice of virtues, through pride have been turned into bats! That monk was a worker of miracles, of whom it is written in the Life of St. Pacomius and St. Palemon that he walked on blazing embers without being burned; but on that same feat he prided himself and held others to scorn, and said of himself: "Which of you will do as much as that?" St. Palemon corrected him, seeing that it was pride; and in the end he came to fall miserably and make an evil end. Scripture and the lives of the saints are full of like examples.

On this account, then, we stand in special need of being well grounded in this virtue, since otherwise we would be in great danger of losing our heads with vanity and falling into the sin of pride, and that the greatest pride there is, which is spiritual pride. St. Bonaventure, illustrating this point, says that there are two sorts of pride, one of temporal things, which he calls fleshly pride, and the other of spiritual things, which he calls spiritual pride; and the latter he says is a greater pride and a worse sin than the for-

mer. And the reason is clear; for the proud man, as St. Bonaventure says, is a thief, committing theft inasmuch as he takes away another's property against the will of the owner. The man exalts himself with the glory and honor that belongs to God, and which God will not give to any other, but reserves for Himself. *My glory, I will not give to another*, He says by Isaias (xlii. 8). That is what the proud man wishes to steal away from God, and exalt himself thereon, and attribute it to himself. Now when a man is proud of a happy disposition, of a nobility, of a healthy and well-formed body, a good understanding, letters, and other like abilities, he is a thief; but the theft is not so great, for while it is true that all these goods are of God, yet they are but the chaff and bran of His house; but he who is proud of spiritual gifts, of sanctity, of the fruit of gains in souls, is a great thief and robber of the honor of God—a robber of the first magnitude, who steals the richest and most precious jewels, jewels of the greatest value in the sight of God, Who sets such store by them that for them He gave His blood and life, and thought it a good bargain. So the blessed St. Francis lived in great fear of falling into this pride, and used to say to God: "Lord, if Thou givest me anything, take care of it Thyself; for I dare not undertake the charge, seeing that I am a great robber who make my own fortune with Thy goods." Let us, then, also live in this fear. We have more reason to feel it, since we are not so humble as St. Francis. Let us not fall into so dangerous a pride; let us not make our own fortune with the goods of God that we handle and God has entrusted to us with much confidence; let us take no complacency in them, nor attribute anything to ourselves; let us return the whole to God.

Not without great mystery did Christ our Redeemer, when He appeared to His disciples on the day of His glorious Ascension, first reprove them for their incredulity and hardness of heart (Mark xvi. 14), and afterwards com-

mand them to go and preach the Gospel all over the world and give them power to work many great miracles. Thereby He gave us to understand that whoever is to be elevated to great things must first be humbled and abased in himself and know his own weaknesses and miseries; to the end that, though he afterwards soar above the heavens and work miracles, he may remain rooted in knowledge of himself and taken up with his own lowliness. Theodoret notes to this effect how, when God meant to choose Moses for captain and head of His people and work through him so many marvels and signs as He intended to work, His will was first of all that that hand which was to divide the waters of the Red Sea, and do so many other marvelous thing, Moses was to place within his bosom and draw out full of leprosy (Exod. iv. 6).

The second reason why we stand in particular need of humility is to produce fruit by the ministries which we exercise. Thus humility is not only necessary for ourselves and for our own spiritual profit, that we may not get vain and proud and so lose ourselves, but also to gain over our neighbors and produce fruit in their souls. One of the chiefest and most effectual means to this is humility, whereby we distrust ourselves and put no reliance on our own abilities, industry, and prudence, but put all our confidence in God, and to Him we refer and attribute all, according to that saying of the Wise Man: *Put confidence in God with thy whole heart, and rely not on thine own prudence* (Prov. iii. 5). The reason of this, as we shall say presently more at large, is because when, having no confidence in ourselves but putting all our confidence in God, we attribute all to Him and give Him charge of all, we thereby greatly oblige Him to take the matter up. Lord, do Thy business: the conversion of souls is Thy business and not ours; what good are we for that? But when we go about the matter full of confidence in our own expedients and our own reasons, we make ourselves partners in the business,

attributing much to ourselves, and all that we take away from God. It is like the two scales in a balance; when the one goes up, the other goes down; whatever we attribute to ourselves, we take away from God, and endeavor to exalt ourselves with the glory and honor which is properly His; and so He permits all our doings to come to nothing. Would to God that sometimes this be not the reason why we do not produce so much fruit in our neighbor!

We read of our blessed Father Ignatius that by the talks on Christian doctrine that he held in Rome, plain utterances with unpolished and incorrect words, as he was only imperfectly acquainted with Italian, he did so much good to souls that, when the discourse was over, the hearers went, with hearts smitten with grief, sighing and sobbing to the feet of their confessor, hardly able to speak for their tears and sobs. That was because he did not put his strength in words, but in the Spirit—*not in rhetoric of human wisdom, but in the manifestation of the Spirit and power of God*, as St. Paul says (I Cor. ii. 4). He had no confidence in himself and put all his confidence in God, and so God gave such force and spirit to those unpolished and incorrect words that he seemed to pour them out like a torrent, as it were, of flames kindling the hearts of the hearers. I do not know but that God's not producing such fruit nowadays is because we rest much on our own prudence and are greatly buoyed up with confidence in our own methods of urging considerations, our literary style and reasonings, our highly polished and elegant diction, and so we find great relish and satisfaction in ourselves. But I will bring it about, says God, that just when you have said the finest things and elaborated the best body of argument, and are very well satisfied and proud of yourself and think that you have really done something, you shall then do less than ever, and that word shall be accomplished in you which was spoken by the Prophet Osee: *Give them, O Lord, what wilt thou give them? Give them barren wombs without chil-*



*dren, and dry breasts without milk* (ix. 14) : I will bring it about *that you shall have nothing more than a name*—Father Mombo Bombo the Great Preacher—the name alone shall remain to you, and you shall have no spiritual children. I will give you dry breasts, that children may not hold on to you, nor what you say take any hold on them. This is what he deserves who seeks to make his fortune out of the property of God and to attribute to himself what belongs to His Divine Majesty.

I am not saying that you are to go into the pulpit without having right well studied and well looked up the matter of your sermon. But that is not enough; it must also have been right well wept over and commended to God; and after you have broken your head with study and reflection you must say: *We are useless servants, what we were bound to do we have done* (Luke xvii. 10). What can I do? At most make a little noise with my words, like a musket without ball, but as for its going home to the heart, Thou, O Lord, must give that: *The King's heart is in the hands of the Lord: wherever he wishes, he will incline it* (Prov. xxi. 1). Thou, O Lord, art He Who must pierce and move hearts; what good are we for that? What proportion is there in our words and in any human motives at our command, with an end so high and supernatural as the conversion of souls? None. Why, then, are we so proud and satisfied with ourselves when it seems that some good is being done and our efforts are crowned with success, as if we had accomplished anything? *Shall the axe, says God, glory, or the saw, against him that worketh with it, saying: It is I that have cut, I that have sawn the timber? It is as though the stuff were to exalt itself and grow saucy because they raise it, whereas it is but a piece of wood that can do nothing for itself unless they take it in hand* (Isaias x. 15). In this relation, then, we stand to God in respect of the spiritual and supernatural end of the conversion of souls. We are as pieces of wood, inasmuch as we cannot stir nor guide

our own movements if God does not guide them. And so we must attribute all to Him, and we have nothing of our own to glory in.

God makes great account of our not relying on our own abilities and human means and attributing nothing to ourselves, but attributing all to Him and giving Him the glory of all. For this reason, St. Paul says, Christ our Redeemer did not choose learned men for the preaching of the Gospel and the conversion of the world, nor eloquent men, but poor fishermen, uneducated and without letters. *God hath chosen the ignorant and uneducated to confound the wise ones of the world; he hath chosen the poor and the weak to confound the strong and powerful; he hath chosen the lowly and abject of the world, and what appeared as nothing in it, to put to rout kings and emperors and all the great ones of earth* (I Cor. i. 27). Do you know why? St. Paul tells you: *That man may not glory in the sight of God, nor have any occasion to attribute anything to himself, but that he who glorieth should glory in the Lord* (I Cor. i. 29-31; Jerem. ix. 23-24). If the preachers of the Gospel had been very rich and powerful, and with a mighty host and armed forces had traversed the world to preach the Gospel, the conversion might have been attributed to the power and force of arms. If God had chosen to this end great doctors and even great rhetoricians of the world, who by their learning and eloquence had convinced the philosophers, the conversion might have been attributed to their eloquence and the subtlety of their arguments, and to that extent the credit and reputation of the power of Christ would have been diminished. But it was not done in that way. As St. Paul says: *God willed not that it should be done by wisdom and eloquence of words, not to lessen our esteem of the power and efficacy of the cross and passion of Christ* (I Cor. i. 17). St. Augustine says: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, wishing to bend and bow down the necks of the proud, did not seek fishermen through orators, but through

poor fishermen He overthrew and won over orators and emperors. Cyprian was a great orator, but before him Peter was a fisherman, that through him the orator might believe and be converted, and not the orator only, but even the emperor"—*Non quaesivit per oratorem piscatorem, sed e piscatore lucratus est imperatorem. Magnus Cyprianus orator, sed prius Petrus piscator, per quem postea crederet non solum orator sed et imperator.*

Holy Scripture is full of instances in which God chose weak instruments and intermediaries to do great things, to teach us that truth and fix it firm in our hearts, that we have nothing to glory in, nothing to attribute to ourselves, but should refer it all to God. That is the moral pointed to us by that signal victory of Judith, one weak woman against an army of more than a hundred and forty thousand men. That is the moral pointed to us by a poor shepherd David, a youth without arms, with his sling overthrowing the giant Goliath. *That all the world may know, says the text, that there is a God in Israel, and all may understand that he needeth not sword nor lance to conquer, but his is the battle and his the victory* (I Kings xvii. 46).

Such also was the mystery of Gedeon, who had assembled thirty-two thousand men against the Madianites, who were more than one hundred and thirty thousand. God said to him: *There is much people with thee, nor shall Madian be delivered into their hands* (Judges vii. 2). See what a reasoning that was of God: "Thou canst not conquer, because thou art many." If He had said: "Thou canst not conquer, because they are many, and you few," it looks as if He would have had something to go upon. You are mistaken, you do not understand; that would have been a piece of human reasoning, but quite different is the reasoning of God. "You cannot be victorious, because you are too many." And why not? *That Israel may not glory against me and say, By the strength of my own arm I have wrought my own deliverance, and pride itself on the victory, think-*

ing that by its own resources it had gained the day. God's plan was that only three hundred men should remain with Gedeon, and with these He bade him give battle to the enemy, and with these He gave him the victory. And even for that it was not necessary to put on armor or lay hand to sword. By the mere sounding of the trumpets which they held in one hand, and the noise of the breaking pitchers and the brightness of the lighted lamps which they held in the other, God struck such terror and confusion into the enemy that they fell foul of one another and slew one another in flight, thinking that the whole world was upon them. Now you shall not say that it was by your own strength that you were victorious. That is what God intends.

Now if in temporal and human things, in which the means that we take do bear some proportion to the end, and our strength some proportion to the victory, God would not have us attribute anything to ourselves, but would have the victory in battle and the good success of our business all put down to Him; if even in the work of nature neither he that plants nor he that waters goes for anything—it is not the gardener who makes the plants grow and the trees bear fruit, but God—what shall it be in spiritual and supernatural things regarding the conversion of souls and their advancement and increase in virtue, where our applications, powers, and attentions fall so far short that there is no proportion between them and so high an end! So says the Apostle St. Paul: *Neither he who planteth is anything, or he who watereth, but God alone is he who can give the increase and spiritual fruit* (I Cor. iii. 7). God alone can strike terror and alarm into the hearts of men. God alone can make men abhor their sins and abandon their evil life; all we can do is to make a little noise with the trumpet of the Gospel. And if we break the pitchers of our bodies by mortification, that so our light may shine before men by an exemplary life, it will be no little thing for us to have done that much; with that, God will give the victory.



Let us draw from this two lessons that will be a great help to us to carry on our ministrations with much consolation and profit, as well our own as that of our neighbor. The first is what has been said, that we should distrust ourselves and put our whole confidence in God, and attribute to Him all the fruit and good success of our efforts: "Let us not be proud, but own ourselves useless, that so we may be useful and profitable." And St. Ambrose says: If you wish to do much good to your neighbor, observe the instruction which the Apostle St. Peter teaches us: *Let him who speaketh account that God putteth the words in his mouth; let him who worketh account that God it is that worketh in his place, and give him the glory and honor of all* (I Pet. iv. 11). Let us not attribute to ourselves anything; let us pride ourselves on nothing, nor take vain satisfaction anywhere.

The second lesson that we have to learn is not to be discouraged or lose heart in view of our feebleness and misery. We stand in great need of this lesson also; since, seeing himself called to so high and supernatural an end as is the conversion of souls, the drawing of them out of sins, heresies, and misbeliefs, who that casts his eyes upon himself can help being filled with dismay! Good Lord, where is there a disproportion so great! "I am not the man for this enterprise, seeing that I am the most necessitous and most miserable of all." Oh, how mistaken you are! Rather on this very account you are the man for this enterprise. Moses could not bring himself to believe that he was to do so great a work as to lead the people of Israel out of the captivity of Egypt, and excused himself before God, Who wished to send him to it. *Who am I to go and speak to the King, and make him allow the people of Israel to go out of Egypt? Send, O Lord, him whom thou art to send* (Exod. iii. 11; iv. 13), *I am not the man to do it, seeing that I am slow of speech*. That is what I wanted, says God, for it is not thou who art to do it. *I will be with thee, and I will*

*teach thee what to say.* The same happened to the Prophet Jeremy. God wished to send him to preach to the nations, and he began to excuse himself. *Ah, ah, ah, Lord, seest thou not that I cannot speak to the point, seeing that I am but a child* (Jerem. i. 6). How canst thou wish to send me on such a great errand? Even on that very account that thou reckonest correctly, it is the very thing that God is seeking. On the other hand, if thou wert possessed of great abilities, perhaps God would not choose thee for the work, because thou wouldst take pride therein, and attribute the doing of it to thyself. It is God's way to choose humble folk, people who attribute nothing to themselves, and by them He wishes to do great things.

The holy Gospels relate that, when the apostles came from preaching, Christ our Redeemer, seeing the fruit they had gathered and the great wonders they had done, rejoiced in the Holy Ghost and began to glorify and give thanks to His eternal Father. *I give thee thanks, Eternal Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent of the world, and hast revealed them to little ones, and by them hast willed to do so many marvels and miracles: blessed and praised be thou, O Lord, forever, for so it hath pleased thee* (Luke x. 21). Oh, how blessed are the little ones! Blessed are the humble, they who attribute nothing to themselves: for these are they whom God raises up; these are they by whom He works wonders; them He takes for instruments to work great things, great conversions and great fruit of souls. Therefore let none be discouraged, let none lose heart. *Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you the kingdom* (Luke xii. 32). Be not alarmed nor discouraged, thou least Society of Jesus, for it has pleased your heavenly Father to lay open to you the souls and hearts of men. "I will be with you," said Christ our Redeemer to our Father Ignatius on his way to Rome. *Ego vobis Romae propitius ero.* "I will aid you, I will be in

your company." From this miracle and marvelous apparition there has been given to our order this name, the appellation of "Society of Jesus," that we may understand that we are not called to the Society and Order of Ignatius, but to the Society of Jesus, and make sure that Jesus will ever be at hand to help us as He promised our Father, and that we have Him for Leader and Captain, *caudillo y capitan*, and so should not grow faint or disheartened over this so great enterprise of the help of souls to which God has called us.

## CHAPTER V

### *Of the First Degree of Humility, Which Is to Make Little Account of Oneself and Always Think Poorly of Oneself*

ST. LAWRENCE JUSTINIAN says that no one knows well what humility is except him who has received of God the gift of being humble. It is a very difficult thing to know. In nothing, says the saint, is man so mistaken as in the discernment of true humility. Think you it consists in saying, "I am a wretched proud fellow?" If it consisted in that, it would be a very easy matter; we should all be humble, since we all avow that we are some of us So-So, and other of us Oh-Oh, none of us any better than we should be. God grant that that may be our real sentiment, and that we do not say it with the lips only and for form's sake. Think you that humility consists in wearing poor cheap clothes and being engaged in lowly and mean occupations? It does not consist in that, for there also there may be much pride, and desire of being regarded and esteemed, and taking oneself to be better and more humble than others, which is a subtle form of pride. It is true that these exterior things are great aids to true humility if they are taken as they ought, as we shall say further on; but after all humility does not consist in them. St. Jerome says: "Many go

after the shadow and appearance of humility. An easy thing it is to carry one's head bent forward, eyes on the ground, to speak in an undertone, to sigh frequently, and at every word to call ourselves miserable sinners; but if you touch these people up with one word, though it be a very light one, you will at once see how far they are from true humility. Let all these artificial phrases be dropped, all those hypocrisies and outward pretensions be cast out. The truly humble man shows himself in patience and endurance. This," says St. Jerome, "is the touchstone by which true humility is known."

St. Bernard descends further into details, explaining what this virtue is, and lays down its definition. "Humility is a virtue whereby man, considering and seeing his defects and miseries, is vile in his own eyes." Humility does not consist in words, nor in exterior things, but lies in the depths of the heart, in cherishing lowly sentiments of oneself, in taking oneself to be of little account and wishing oneself to be so taken and of low repute among others, all this springing from a most profound knowledge of oneself. Further to declare and particularize this, the saints assign many degrees of humility. St. Benedict, whom St. Thomas and other saints follow, assigns twelve degrees. St. Anselm assigns seven. St. Bonaventure reduces them to three; and that is the enumeration we shall for the present follow for brevity's sake, and also that, by gathering the doctrine into fewer points, we may the better keep it before our eyes and put it in execution.

The first degree of humility, says St. Bonaventure, is for a man to make little account of himself and think meanly of himself, and the one necessary means to this is knowledge of oneself. These are the two things included in the definition of humility given by St. Bernard, and thus it includes only this first degree. Humility is a virtue whereby a man makes little account of himself; you see there the first degree. And this he does, says St. Bernard, by having



a true knowledge of himself and of his miseries and defects. On this account some assign for the first degree of humility this knowledge of oneself, and with good reason. But for ourselves, as we reduce all the degrees to St. Bonaventure's three, we put for the first degree of humility the making little account of oneself; and as for self-knowledge, we put it down as the necessary means to gain this degree of humility: but in substance it all comes to the same thing. We are all agreed in this, that knowledge of oneself is the first principle and foundation for the attainment of humility and the reckoning of ourselves for what we really are. For how can you take a man for what he is if you do not know what he is? It cannot be; it is necessary for you first to know what you are, and so you will reckon and esteem yourself accordingly. Thus it is necessary for you first to know what you are, and then reckon yourself for what you are. You have license to do that, since if you reckon yourself for what you are, you will be very humble, for you will make very little account of yourself; but if you wish to reckon yourself for more than you are, that is pride. St. Isidore says: "A man is called proud from his taking himself, and wishing to be taken by others, for something above what he is and more than he is"—*Superbus dictus est qui vult videri plus quam est*. And this is one of the reasons which some give for God's loving humility so much, because He is a great lover of truth, and humility is truth, while pride and presumption is a lie and deceit, for you are not what you think to be and wish to have others think you are. If you wish, then, to live in truth and humility, take yourself to be what you are. Surely no one should think that we are asking too much in asking you to take yourself for what you are and not wishing to be taken for more, since it is not reasonable for anyone to take himself for more than he is; rather it would be a very great and dangerous delusion for anyone to be deceived about himself, taking himself for some other than what he is.

## CHAPTER VI

*Of Self-Knowledge as the Root, and the Sole and Necessary Means to Attain Humility*

LET us begin to dig and go down deep in what we are and in the knowledge of our miseries and weaknesses, that so we may discover this richest of treasures. St. Jerome says: "Go into this dunghill of your mean and abject condition, of your sins and miseries; there you shall find the precious pearls of humility." Let us begin with our bodily condition; let that be the first blow of the pickax. "Keep these three things ever before your eyes," says St. Bernard, "what you were, what you are, what you shall be. Keep ever before your eyes what you were before you were begotten, that is, matter foul and filthy beyond expression; what you are now, that is, a sack of ordure; what you shall be shortly, that is, food for worms." We have a good deal here to meditate and dig into. Well may Pope Innocent cry out: "O base and vile condition of human nature! Look at the trees and herbs of the field, and you will find that they produce and bring forth of themselves flowers, leaves, and fruits of excellent quality, while man produces of himself vermin in thousands. The plants and trees produce of themselves oil, wine, and balsam, and yield of themselves a most sweet fragrance; while man brings forth of himself a thousand uncleannesses and an abominable stench, nauseous to think of, still more to mention. To sum up, such as is the tree, such is the fruit, since a bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit."

Certainly it is with good reason and much propriety that the saints compare man's body to a dunghill covered with snow, on the outside looking soft and fair, and within full of all manner of uncleanness and filth. The blessed St. Bernard says: "If you set yourself to consider what you bring out by the eyes, ears, mouth, and nostrils, and the

other outlets of the body, there is no dunghill so filthy, or that brings forth of itself such things." Oh, how well did holy Job say: "What is man but a little dust, and a breeding-ground of worms!" *To rottenness [podre] I said, Thou art my father [padre]*. The likeness that there is between *podre* and *padre* is much greater between us and rottenness. *And to worms I said, Ye are my mother and my sisters* (Job xvii. 14). What, then, have we to be proud of? *Why is earth and ashes proud?* (Ecclus. x. 9). Of this origin at least we have nothing to be proud of, but plenty to humble us and hold us of little account. And so St. Gregory says: "The guardian of humility is the remembrance of our own filthiness." It is well kept under cover of these ashes.

Let us pass on, and deliver another blow with the pickax. See what you were before God created you, and you will find that you were nothing and that you were quite unable to emerge from that darkness of nonentity; only God of His goodness and mercy drew you out of that profound abyss and placed you in the number of His creatures, giving you the true and real being that you possess. Thus, so far as rests with ourselves, we are nothing; so we ought to equate ourselves on our part to the things that are not, and attribute to God the advantage that we have over them. *If any man thinketh himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself*. So St. Paul says (Gal. vi. 3). Here is a great mine opened to us, whence to enrich ourselves with humility.

And even further on this point, even after we are created and have received being, we do not uphold ourselves of ourselves. It is not as when the workman has done his work with the house; he leaves it after he has built it, and it upholds itself without need of any workman to do that. It is not so with us; after we are created, we have as much need of God every moment of our life, not to lose the being that we have got, as we had, when we were nothing, to

attain to being. He is ever sustaining and holding us up by His powerful hand, not to let us fall back into the deep pit of nothingness out of which He originally drew us. So David says: *Thou, O Lord, hath made me and put thy hand over me* (Psalm cxxxviii. 5). This hand of Thine, which Thou holdest over me, O Lord, keeps me afoot and preserves me from going back and returning to the nothingness in which I was before. We are always so tied to and dependent on this support of God that, if that failed us and He let us slip from His hand one single instant, in that same point of time we should swoon away and cease to be, as light vanishes from the earth when the sun is hidden. Therefore Holy Scripture says: *All nations are before God as if they were not, and as nothingness and emptiness are they counted before Him* (Isaias xl. 17). This is what we all keep saying at every step, that we are nothing; but I believe that we say it only with the lips without understanding what we say. Oh, if we did understand it and felt it as the prophet understood and felt it, when he said: *I am, O Lord, as nothing before thee* (Psalm xxxviii. 6). Truly I am nothing of myself; and the being that I have, I have it not but of Thee, O Lord: Thou gavest me it, and to Thee I have to attribute it, and I have nothing to glory in or be vain over on that score, because I had no hand in it. It is Thou that wert ever preserving this being and keeping it afoot, ever giving me the strength to act. All that being, all that power, all that strength to act, had to come to us of Thy hand, for we of our part have no power or strength for anything, since we are nothing. What, then, have we that we can possibly be proud of? Is it of our nothingness? Just now we were saying: What hast thou to be proud of, dust and ashes? Now we may say: What hast thou to be proud of, being nothing, which is something less than dust and ashes? What reason or what occasion has nothingness to deck itself out, and grow to pride, and take itself to be something? None, certainly.



## CHAPTER VII

*Of Another Main Motive for a Man to Know Himself and Gain Humility, Which Is the Consideration of His Sins*

LET us go on and dig deeper still in the knowledge of ourselves: let us give another stroke of the pickax. But what further ground is there to dig? What is deeper than nothingness? Yes, there is something a good deal deeper. What is that? The sin that you have added to your nothingness. Oh, what a deep thing is that! Much deeper it is than nothingness, since sin is worse than not being at all, and it were better not to have been than to have sinned. So Christ our Redeemer said of Judas, who was to sell Him: *It were better for him if he had never been born* (Matt. xxvi. 24). There is no position so low, so cut off and estranged from goodness, as man in mortal sin, disinherited of heaven, enemy of God, sentenced to hell for ever and for ever. And although now, by the goodness of the Lord, you have no mortal sin on your conscience, yet we ought to remember the time when we were in sin, just as, to know our nothingness, we called to mind the time when we had no being. See in what a wretched state you were when before the eyes of God you were foul, displeasing, and His enemy, a child of wrath, bound over to everlasting fires; and so depreciate yourself and abase yourself to the lowest degree that you can. There is plenty of room for it. You may very well believe that, however much you put down and humble yourself, you cannot go too low, nor fathom the abyss of discredit which he deserves who has offended the infinite good, which is God. There is no touching bottom in this business; it is a profound and infinite abyss, for till we see in heaven how good God is, we cannot entirely know how evil sin is as being against God, and the evil he deserves who commits it.

Oh, if we could go on with this consideration and dig and go deep in this mine of our sins and miseries, how humble should we be! How little esteem should we have of ourselves, and how well should we take being put down and discredited! When a man has been a traitor to God, what measure of disparagement will he not embrace for love of Him! When a man has bartered away God for a fancy and appetite of his own and the gratification of a moment; when he has offended his Creator and Lord, and deserved to be in hell for ever and ever, what insults, what injuries, what affronts will he not take in good part, in compensation and satisfaction for the offenses which he has committed against the majesty of God! The Prophet David said: *Before the scourge came wherewith God afflicteth and humbleth me, I offended Him* (Psalm cxviii. 67); and for that I was silent and durst not complain, because all is much less than it should have been, to be in proportion to my faults. Thou hast chastised me, O Lord, as I deserved, for all that we can suffer in this life is as nothing in comparison with what one mortal sin that we have committed deserves. Think you not that he deserves to be dishonored and despised who has dishonored and despised God? Think you not that it is reasonable that he be held in little regard who has held God in little regard? Think you not that the will which has dared to offend its Creator deserves that henceforth never shall anything come off of what it purposes and wishes, in punishment of so great audacity on its part?

Herein is another particular to be observed, that, though we may trust in the mercy of God that He has now pardoned our sins, yet after all we have no certainty thereof. Man knows not, says the Wise Man, whether God loves or abhors him. *Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred* (Eccles. ix. 1). *I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet I am not thereby justified*, said St. Paul (I Cor. iv. 4). Woe is me if I am not justified; little, then, will it profit me that I am a religious and have converted oth-

ers. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, says the Apostle, though I have the gift of prophecy, and know all sciences; though I give all my goods to the poor, and have converted the whole world, if I have not charity, I am nothing and it profiteth me nothing* (I Cor. xiii. 1-3). Woe to you if you have not charity and the grace of God; you are nothing, and less than nothing. This is a great motive for walking in humility, and always thinking meanly of oneself, and making small account of oneself, not to know whether one is in grace or whether one is in sin. If I know for certain that I have offended God and do not know for certain whether I am forgiven, who will dare to raise his head? Who will not, in this thought, go about in confusion and humble himself beneath the earth?

St. Gregory says that God has hidden His grace from us that we might make sure of one grace, namely, humility—*ut unam gratiam certam habeamus, humilitatem*. And though it seems painful, this fear and uncertainty that God has left us in, not knowing for certain whether we be in His grace or not, yet this has proved a blessing and mercy of His in so far as it is helpful to us for attaining humility, preserving the same, and not despising anyone however many sins he has committed. Oh, the possibility that So-and-So, though he has committed more sins than I have, may be now forgiven and in the grace of God, whereas I do not know if I am! This consideration serves us as a spur not to be negligent, but always to walk in fear and humility before God, craving His pardon and mercy, as the Wise Man advises us: *Blessed is the man who is ever in fear* (Prov. xxviii. 14): *Of sin forgiven be not without fear* (Ecclus. v. 5). A very efficacious consideration, this of our sins, to keep us within bounds and make us ever walk in humility and bowed down to earth; and there is much room to dig and go deep therein.

Further, if we set ourselves to consider the effects and losses caused in us by original sin, we shall find copious

and abundant material to humble us and keep us within small compass. Our nature is so depraved by sin that, as a stone by its weight is inclined to go down to the ground, so we by the corruption of original sin have a most lively inclination to the things of our flesh, our honor and temporal profit; we are quite alive to earthly things that affect us and very dead to the taste of heavenly and spiritual things; that element rules in us which ought to obey, and that obeys which ought to rule; and, finally, we are so miserable that under the human body erect and straight we carry hidden appetites of beasts and hearts bowed down to earth. *Wicked is the heart of all men and unsearchable: who shall know it?* (Jerem. xvii. 9). Who can know the malice of the human heart? The more you dig in this wall, the more abominations will be brought to light, as was shown in figure to Ezekiel (viii. 8).

Then if we set ourselves to consider our present faults, we shall find ourselves full of them; for this is what we have of our own creation. How ready we are with our tongue, how careless in the custody of our thought, how inconstant in our good resolutions, what lovers of our own interest and ease, how keen to gratify our appetites, how full of self-love, self-will, and our own judgment, how lively our passions still are, how untamed our evil inclinations, and how easily we let ourselves be carried away by them!

St. Gregory says very well on those words of Job: *Against a leaf that is carried away by the wind Thou showest Thy power* (Job xiii. 25), that there is much reason for comparing man to the leaf of a tree; for, as that waves and turns with every wind, so does man put about and change under the wind of passions and temptations. Now it is anger that excites him, now foolish mirth, now the passion of avarice and ambition carries him away, now that of lust, now pride lifts him up, now inordinate fear overwhelms and bears him down. So Isaias says: *We are all fallen like leaves, and our iniquities like a wind have car-*



*ried us away* (Isaias lxiv. 6). As the leaves of trees are buffeted and fall before the winds, so we are buffeted and overthrown by temptations; we have no stability, no firmness in virtue nor in our good resolutions. We do well to be confounded and humble ourselves, not only for our evils and sins, but even considering the works that seem to us quite good. If we consider and examine them well, we shall find abundant occasion and matter to humble ourselves for the faults and imperfections that are commonly mingled with them, according to the saying of the same prophet: *We have come to be all unclean as lepers; and as a rag stained with loathsome blood, so are all our good works* (Isaias lxiv. 6), if we consider the imperfections that are usually found in them, of which we have spoken elsewhere, and need not enlarge on it now.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *How We Should So Exercise Ourselves in Self-Knowledge as Not to Be Discouraged or Lose Confidence*

SO great is our misery, and we have so much cause to humble ourselves and such experience of ourselves, that it would seem we need rather to be encouraged and braced up against discouragement and downheartedness at sight of our so many faults and imperfections, than exhorted to acknowledgment of the same. And so it is in truth to this extent that saints and masters of spiritual life teach us, when we dig and go deep down in knowledge of our miseries and weaknesses, not to do it in such a way as to stop at that—for fear lest the soul should lose confidence and fall into despair at the sight of so great misery and such inconstancy in good resolutions—but to pass on to the recognition of the goodness of God, and place in Him our entire confidence. Thus St. Paul says that our sadness for having sinned should not go the length of inducing tor-

por and despair, *lest such a one be swallowed up in excess of sadness* (II Cor. ii. 7), but should be a sadness tempered and mingled with hope of pardon, fixing one's eyes on the mercy of God, and not stopping short at the mere consideration of sin and its foulness and gravity. They say in like manner that we must not stop short at the recognition of our miseries and weaknesses, lest we lose heart and despond; but this must be the end of our digging and going deep down in knowledge of ourselves, to see that on our side we have no support nor anything to stand upon, and forthwith cast our eyes on God and trust in Him. In this way not only shall we not be discouraged, but rather encouraged and strengthened; for what serves to breed discouragement when you regard yourself, serves to breed vigor and encouragement when you look up to God. And the better you know your own weakness, and the more you distrust yourself, looking to God, steadying yourself in Him, and putting in Him all your confidence, the stronger you will be and the more robust and better prepared to encounter all that comes.

At the same time the saints observe a thing of great importance, that, while we ought not to stop upon the study of our own miseries and weaknesses to such a degree as to lose confidence and fall into despair, but we must pass on to the consideration of the goodness, mercy, and liberality of God, and put our whole confidence in that; so neither on the other hand should we stop there, but turn at once our eyes back upon ourselves and on our own weakness and misery. For if we stop on the knowledge of the goodness, mercy, and liberality of God, and forget what we are of ourselves, there is therein great danger of our falling into presumption and pride, because we should come to an unmeasured sense of security in ourselves and go our way in too great confidence, without the necessary reserve and fear. That is a great pitfall, the root and beginning of great and fearful lapses. Oh, how many spiritual persons,

who seemed to be soaring aloft to heaven in the practice of prayer and contemplation, have fallen into this pitfall! Oh, how many who were truly saints, and great saints, have come hereby to miserable falls! All because they forgot themselves, all because they settled down into an excessive security on the strength of the favors they received from God. They were full of self-confidence, as though for them there was no danger; so they came to fall miserably. Our books are full of examples of this sort.

St. Basil says that the cause of that miserable fall of King David into adultery and murder was a piece of presumption that he once had when he was visited by God with great abundance of consolation, and dared this speech: *I said in my excess, I shall never be upset* (Psalm xxix. 7). But wait a little: God will just in some small measure withdraw His hand; these extraordinary favors and consolations will cease; and you will see what happens: *Thou hast turned Thy face away from me, and I am troubled* (ibid.) God will leave you in your poverty, and you will make an exhibition of yourself and come to know to your sorrow, after a fall, what you would not know while you were being favored and visited by God. And the cause of the fall and denial of the Apostle St. Peter, St. Basil also says, was his having presumed and confided vainly in himself. *Though I should have to die with Thee, I would not deny Thee: though all be scandalized in Thee, I will never be scandalized* (Matt. xxvi. 33, 35). For this arrogance and presumption God allowed him to fall, that he might humble himself and know himself better. We should never take our eyes off ourselves, nor hold ourselves secure in this life, but look at what we are and walk always in great fear of ourselves and with great caution and care, lest the enemy that we have within us should practise some treason upon us and trip us up to a fall.

Thus we should neither stop short on the knowledge of our miseries and weaknesses, but pass on straight to the

knowledge of the goodness of God; nor stop short either on the knowledge of God and His mercies and favors, but straight turn our eyes down upon ourselves. This is the Jacob's ladder, one end resting on the earth of self-knowledge, and the other reaching to the height of heaven. By this you must go up and down, as the angels went up and down by that. Mount up to the knowledge of the goodness of God, and stop not there, lest you come to presumption, but go back again down to the knowledge of yourself; and stay not there, not to lose heart and confidence, but mount up once more to the knowledge of God, to have confidence in Him: it must all be going up and down by this ladder.

In this way St. Catharine of Siena practised this exercise to rid herself of various temptations wherewith the devil assailed her, as she herself relates in her Dialogues. When the devil tempted her to put her to confusion, trying to make her think that her whole life had been a delusion, then she raised and lifted herself up in the mercy of God, with humility saying: "I confess to my Creator and Lord that all my life has been darkness; but I will hide myself in the wounds of Jesus Christ crucified; I will bathe myself in His blood and so will efface my evil deeds; and I will rejoice in my Creator and Lord. *Thou wilt wash me, and I shall become whiter than snow* (Psalm l. 9)." And when the devil, by a contrary temptation, tried to puff her up with pride, saying: "Thou art perfect, and there is no need for thee to afflict thyself any more, nor bewail thy defects," then she at once humbled herself, and thus answered the Evil One: "Unhappy creature that I am! St. John Baptist had never sinned, and was sanctified in his mother's womb, and he nevertheless failed not to do severe penance; what, then, must I do, who have committed so many defects and never acknowledged or bewailed them as I ought?" The devil then, enraged to see so much humility on the one hand and so much confidence in God on the other, cried out: "Cursed be thou and whoever put thee up to this! I know



not what way to get at thee! If I cast thee down to make thee lose courage, thou liftest thyself on high on the mercy of God; and if I puff thee up, thou castest thyself down by humility, even to the bottom of hell, and within that very hell thou dost pursue me." After this he let her alone, seeing he came off with heavy loss from all assaults he made on her. In this way, then, we must practise this exercise, on the one side full of fear and caution, and on the other vigorous and cheerful; fearful of ourselves, and vigorous and joyful in God. These are the two lessons that holy man [A Kempis] says that God daily teaches His elect—on the one hand to see their own defects and on the other to see the goodness of God, Who so lovingly rids them of them.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Of the Good Things and Great Advantages That There Are in the Exercise of Self-Knowledge*

TO encourage us more in this exercise of self-knowledge, we will go on to mention some of the great inducements to it and advantages that there are in it. We have already mentioned one very principal inducement, that it is the foundation and root of humility and a necessary means to get it and keep it. Someone asked one of those ancient Fathers how he might obtain true humility, and he answered: "By keeping your eyes off other people's faults and fixing them on your own." By digging down and going deep in self-knowledge you will attain to true humility. That is enough to make us attend much to this exercise, seeing that it is worth so much to us for the gaining of the virtue of humility.

But the saints go further, and say that humble knowledge of oneself is the surest way of knowing God, which is the profoundest of all sciences. This is the reason given

by St. Bernard. Self-knowledge is deeper and more profitable than other sciences, because thereby man comes to the knowledge of God. This is what St. Bonaventure says we are given to understand by that miracle in the Gospel, which Christ our Redeemer worked on the man blind from his birth, putting clay on his eyes, and so giving him bodily sight, thereby to see himself, and also spiritual sight, to know God and adore Him. Thus to us, who are born blind, ignorant of God and of ourselves, God gives sight by putting before our eyes the clay of which we are formed, that, recognizing ourselves to be but a little clay, we may receive the sight of what we are, and know in the first place ourselves and thence come to know God.

The same is the aim of our holy Mother the Church in the ceremony which she practises at the beginning of Lent of putting ashes above our eyes: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return;" that man, knowing himself, may come to know God and be sorry for having offended Him and do penance for his sins. Thus man's seeing himself and knowing himself, is a means to arrive at the knowledge of God; and the better he knows his lowliness, the better will he know and come to see the grandeur and exalted majesty of God. Contrary put next to contrary, and one extreme put in front of another extreme, brings the other out. *Opposita iuxta se posita magis elucent*. White put on black shines out and is much more conspicuous. Now man is the extreme of lowness, and God the extreme of height. These are two contrary extremes; hence it is that the better a man knows himself, seeing that of himself he has no good, but only nothingness and sins, the better he will see the goodness and mercy and liberality of God, stooping to love and deal with such great abjection as ours.

Hence the soul comes to be greatly enkindled and inflamed with the love of God, never ceasing to wonder and

give thanks to God that, miserable and evil as man is, God endures him and does him so many favors, whereas often we cannot endure ourselves. And so great is the goodness and mercy of God towards us, that He not only endures us, but says: *My delights are to be with the children of men* (Prov. viii. 31). What hast Thou found, O Lord, in the children of men, that thou sayest that Thy delights are to be and converse with them?

Therefore did the saints make such use of this exercise of self-knowledge, to come to a better knowledge of God and greater love of His Divine Majesty. That was the exercise and prayer that St. Augustine used: "My God, Who art ever being and never changest, may I know myself and know Thee." This is the prayer in which the humble St. Francis spent days and nights: "Who art Thou, and who am I!" Thereby these saints arrived at a very high knowledge of God. This is a way very safe and sure to this end. The deeper you abase yourself and sink down in self-knowledge, the higher you will mount and grow in knowledge of God and of His goodness and infinite mercy. And again, the higher you mount up and grow in the knowledge of God, the more you will abase yourself and increase in knowledge of yourself. This heavenly light lights up corners and makes the soul ashamed even of what in the world's eyes seems on the contrary very good. St. Bonaventure says: "As when the rays of the sun come into a room, the motes at once appear; so the soul, lit up with the knowledge of God by the rays of that true Sun of Justice, sees at once in herself the tiniest things, and comes to take for evil and defective what a man with less light takes for good."

This is the reason why the saints are so humble and make so little of themselves, because they have more light and a better knowledge of God and therefore also of themselves. They see that of their own stock they have nothing but nothingness and sins. And much as they know themselves,

and many as are the faults that they see in themselves, they always believe that there are many more which they do not see; they believe that what they do know is the lesser part of their bad points and estimate themselves accordingly, believing that, as God is more good than they know, so they themselves are more evil than comes within the compass of their knowledge. Much as we know and understand of God, we can never comprehend Him; there is always more in Him to know and understand. So, however much we know of ourselves, we cannot fathom nor touch the bottom of our own misery. This is no exaggeration, but plain truth; for as man has of his own yield nothing but nothingness and sins, who can humble and abase himself as much as these two titles deserve?

We read of a holy woman that she begged of God light to know herself, and saw in herself such foulness and misery that she could not endure it, and besought God once more: "Lord, not so much, else I shall lose heart." Father Master Avila says that he knew a person who oftentimes asked God to discover to him what he might be. God opened his eyes ever so little—and the sight might have cost him dear; he saw himself so foul and abominable that he cried out aloud: "Lord, in Thy mercy take away this mirror from before my eyes; I have no mind to see more of my own figure."

Hence there arises in the servants of God that holy hatred and abhorrence of themselves of which we have spoken above; for the more they know the immense goodness of God and the more they love it, so much the more do they abhor themselves as being contrary to and an enemy of God, according to that saying of Job (vii. 20): *Why hast Thou set me contrary to Thee, and I am become grievous to myself?* They see that in themselves they have the root of all evils, which is our self-will and the evil and perverse inclination of our flesh, from which proceed all sins, and with this knowledge they rise up against them-



selves and abhor themselves. Does it not seem to you reasonable to abhor him who has made you give up and barter away so great a good as God to take a little gratification and satisfaction? Does it not seem to you reasonable to bear enmity against him who has made you lose everlasting glory and deserve hell for ever and ever? Does it not seem reasonable to abhor him who has caused you such a disaster, and even still tries to bring it on you? Now that is what you are, the opponent and enemy of God, and enemy and opponent of your own good and your own salvation.

## CHAPTER X

### *That Self-Knowledge Does Not Bring Discouragement, but Rather Courage and Strength*

**T**HERE is another very good thing in this exercise of self-knowledge, that not only it does not cause discouragement and cowardice, as one might perhaps expect, but on the contrary great courage and strength for all good work. The reason is that, when a man knows himself, he sees that he has nothing in himself to rest on, and accordingly has no confidence in himself and puts all his confidence in God, in Whom he finds himself strong and capable of anything. Such folk accordingly it is that are able to undertake great things and meet great emergencies and carry great affairs through; for, since they attribute all to God and nothing to themselves, God intervenes and makes the business His own and charges Himself with it. Then it is that He is ready to do wonders and achieve great results through feeble means and instruments, to *show forth the riches of his glory in vessels of mercy, who are his elect* (Rom. ix. 23). To show forth the riches and treasures of His mercies, God seeks for weak and caitiff instruments to do great things. It is in the vessels of greater weakness that He is

wont to store the treasures of His strength, that in this way His glory may better shine forth.

This is what God Himself said to St. Paul when, fatigued with his temptations, the Apostle cried out to be delivered from them. God answered: My grace is sufficient for thee, however many the temptations and weaknesses that thou feelest, since it is then that the power of God shows itself more perfect and more strong, when infirmity and weakness is greater (II Cor. xii. 9). As the physician gains greater honor, the more grievous and dangerous the sickness, so the greater the weakness in us, the greater honor is won for the arm of God. So St. Augustine and St. Ambrose explain this passage. Thus it comes to pass that, when a man knows himself and distrusts himself and puts his whole trust in God, then His Divine Majesty stands by and aids him; and on the contrary when one goes to work confiding in his methods and precautions, then he is forsaken and left forlorn. This, says St. Basil, is the reason why often on occasion of some high feasts, when we desired and expected to make a better meditation and feel more devotion, we feel less, because we were confident in our own methods and our own appliances and preparations; and at other times, when we least thought of it, we are flooded unexpectedly with great blessings of sweetness, that we may understand that this is a grace and mercy of the Lord and not any diligence or merit of our own.

Thus, then, the knowledge that a man has of his own weakness and misery does not discourage or make a coward of him, but animates and strengthens him the more. It is this that the Apostle says: *When I am weak, that is, when I humble myself, then I am strengthened* (II Cor. xii. 10). When I humble and abase myself and know that I can do nothing and am worth nothing, then I am strengthened and lifted up; so St. Augustine and St. Ambrose explain the passage. The more I know and see my infirmity and weakness, fixing my eyes on God, the stronger I find

myself and more robust for every effort, God being my whole confidence and strength. *And the Lord shall be his trust* (Jerem. xvii. 7).

Hence it will be understood that it is not humility, nor do they spring from humility, those fits of discouragement and low spirits that sometimes come over us about our spiritual progress, when we think that we shall never be able to attain virtue or overcome the evil nature and inclination which besets us; or on other occasions, concerning the offices and ministries that obedience puts or might put upon us, saying to ourselves: "Have I the capacity to hear confessions? Have I the capacity to go on missions, or for other like things?" This looks like humility, but often it is not; rather it springs from pride, a man fixing his eyes on himself, as though it was by his own abilities, contrivances, and diligence that he was to be able to do anything, whereas he ought to fix them on God, in Whom we should find strength and encouragement. *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid? If an army rise up against me, my heart shall not fear: if in battle array they stand out against me, in God will I hope. Though I walk in the midst of the shadow of death, and go down to the very gates of hell, my heart shall not fear, since thou, O Lord, art with me* (Psalm xxii. 4; xxvi. 1-3). In how many different words does the holy prophet say the same thing! The Psalms are full of it, to show the abundance of affection and confidence that the psalmist had, and we ought to have, in God. *In my God I will climb over the wall* (Psalm xvii. 34); how high soever it be, it shall be no obstacle in my way. He will overcome giants like locusts. *In my God I will trample upon lions and dragons; with the grace and favor of the Lord we will be strong. God hath trained my hands for battle. Thou, O Lord, hast given my arms the strength of a bow of steel* (Psalm xvii. 35).

## CHAPTER XI

*Of Other Great Goods and Advantages That There Are in Self-Knowledge*

ONE of the chief means that we can apply on our side for the Lord to do us favors and impart to us great gifts and virtues, is to humble ourselves and know our weakness and misery. So said the Apostle St. Paul: *Willingly will I glory in my weaknesses, infirmities and miseries, that so the power of Christ may dwell in me* (II Cor. xii. 9). And so St. Ambrose upon those words: *I rejoice and glory in my infirmities* (II Cor. xii. 10), says: "If the Christian is to glory, he should glory in his lowliness and poverty, because that is the way to grow and be strong before God." St. Augustine applies to this purpose the saying of the prophet: *Lord, thou wilt give thine inheritance rain with goodwill: it was weak, and thou hast set it up* (Psalm lxxvii. 10). When think you that God will give to His inheritance, that is, to the soul, rain with good will, a gracious rain of gifts and graces? When the soul knows her infirmity and misery, then the Lord will set her up, and then shall fall upon her with good will the gracious stream of His gifts. As amongst us the more our poor mendicants discover their poverty and sores to rich and pitiful men, the more they move them to pity and the greater alms they receive at their hands; so the more a man humbles himself and knows himself, and the more he discovers and confides his misery to God, the more does he invite and incline the mercy of God to have compassion and pity on him and to impart to him with greater abundance the gifts of His grace. For it is God *who giveth strength to the weary, and maketh strong and robust them that seem to be undone* (Isaias xi. 29).

To say in short the benefits and advantages of this exercise, I say that self-knowledge is a universal remedy for



all things. Thus in the questions that are put in spiritual conferences that we are wont to hold as to what is the origin of such and such a defect, and what is the remedy for it, in almost all such cases we may answer that the origin of the defect is lack of self-knowledge, and the remedy would be to know and humble oneself. For if you ask whence comes my habit of making rash judgments of my brethren, I say it is from want of self-knowledge; for if you entered into yourself, you would find so much reason to have an eye to and bewail your own disorders that you would take no account of those of others. If you ask whence comes my addressing my brothers in harsh and offensive words, that also comes of lack of self-knowledge; for if you knew yourself, you would take yourself for the least of all and look upon everyone else as your superior, and so you would not dare to address them in that manner. If you ask me whence come excuses, complaints, and murmurings, "Why don't they give me this or that?" or "Why do they treat me in this manner?" it is clear that they arise from the same cause. If you ask how comes it that a man is upset and saddened beyond measure when he is troubled with such and such temptations, or grows melancholy and loses heart when he sees that he falls many times into certain faults, once more that comes of want of self-knowledge; for if you had humility, and well considered the evil of your heart, you would not be troubled or discouraged, but would wonder that worse things did not befall you and you did not fall into greater faults, and you would go about praising and giving thanks to God that He holds you by His hand, not to let you fall into the sins that you would fall into if He did not keep hold of you. What may not come out of a cesspool and running sewer of vices? Such evil odors as these are to be expected from such a dunghill; and from such a tree, such fruit. On these words of the prophet, *He remembereth that we are dust* (Psalm cii. 14), St. Anselm observes: "Is it much that the wind

rising raises the dust?" If you require aid to be very charitable towards your brethren, very obedient, very patient, very penitent, here you will find the aid wanted for all.

Of our Father Francis Borgia we read that one day in traveling he met a nobleman of those realms, a friend of his, who seeing his poverty and the inconvenience that he suffered on the way, condoled with him and begged him to take more thought of his personal comfort. The father said to him with apparent cheerfulness, much dissembling the real state of the case: "Let not your lordship be troubled, nor think that I am so badly off as I look, since I would have you know that I always send before me a courier, who has my lodging ready and supplied with every requisite." The nobleman asked: "Who is this courier?" He replied: "It is my knowledge of myself and the consideration of what I deserve, which is hell for my sins; and when with this knowledge I come to any lodging, however inconvenient and ill-prepared it be, I always think that I am made more comfortable than I deserve."

In the chronicles of the Order of Preachers it is told of blessed St. Margaret of the same order that a religious, a great servant of God and a very spiritual person, on one occasion in conversation with her said to her among other things that he had entreated God many times in prayer to show him the way by which those ancient Fathers had traveled to please God and receive so many favors as they did receive at His hand; and how one night when he was asleep there was put before him a book written in letters of gold, and thereupon a voice awoke him which said: "Arise and read;" whereupon he had risen and read these words, few, but heavenly and divine: "This was the perfection of the ancient Fathers, to love God, to despise themselves, to despise no one, to judge no one." And forthwith the book disappeared.

## CHAPTER XII

*How Much It Behooves Us to Exercise Ourselves in Self-Knowledge*

**T**HALES of Miletus, one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece, being asked what of all the things in nature it was most difficult to know, answered that the most difficult thing was for man to know himself, because our self-love is so great as to bar and hinder this knowledge. Hence that saying, celebrated among the ancients, "Know thyself"—*Nosce teipsum*; and again, "Live by thyself"—*Tecum habita*. But to leave external authorities and come to our own, who are better masters of this science, St. Augustine and St. Bernard say that this science of self-knowledge is the highest and most profitable of all that man has invented and discovered. Men greatly esteem, says St. Augustine, the knowledge of the things of heaven and earth, astronomy, cosmography, the study of the movements of the heavens, the courses of the planets, their properties and influences; but the knowledge of oneself is the highest science and most profitable of all. Other sciences puff up and make people vain, as St. Paul says (I Cor. viii. 1), but this edifies and humbles. So the saints and all masters of spirit insist much on our occupying ourselves at prayer in this exercise; and blame the delusion of those who pass lightly over the knowledge of their own defects, and occupy themselves in other devout thoughts more to their taste, finding no relish in the consideration of their own defects and faults and not liking to present such an ill appearance to themselves, just as an ugly man dares not look at himself in the looking-glass. The glorious St. Bernard says, speaking in the person of God: "O man, if thou wouldst look at thyself and know thyself, thou wouldst be displeasing and disagreeable to thyself, and pleasing and agreeable to Me; but now since thou dost not see nor know thyself, thou art

pleasing to thyself and displeasing to Me. A time will come when thou wilt please neither Me nor thyself; not Me, because thou has sinned; not thyself, because thou wilt burn forever"—*O homo, si te videres, tibi displiceret et mihi placeret. Sed quia te non vides, tibi places et mihi displices. Veniet tempus cum nec mihi nec tibi placebis; mihi, quia peccasti, tibi, quia in aeternum ardebis.*

St. Gregory on this subject says: There are some who, when they begin to serve God and aim a little at virtue, fancy at once that they are good and holy people; so they fix their eyes on their good points in utter forgetfulness of their sins and evil deeds in the past, and sometimes also in the present. Taken up in regarding what is good in them, they disregard and fail to see the many evil deeds that they do. But the good and the elect do just the opposite. While they are really full of virtues and good works, they constantly fix their eyes on the evil that besets them, regarding and considering their faults and imperfections. Now it is readily seen what becomes of the one and the other; since in this way it comes about that those who look at their bad points, preserve their good points and their great virtues, dwelling ever in humility, while on the other hand evil men lose their good points by looking at them, becoming proud and vain of them. Thus the good help themselves by their weak points and make profit out of them; while evil men take harm from the very good that is in them, making bad use of it. So it happens in our daily experience in regard to food, that, though it be good and wholesome, it will make one ill who eats without order and without rule; and, contrariwise, the poison of the viper, taken with a certain measure and moderation, will be a healthful remedy [*triaca*, O. E. *triacal*, our *treacle*, from the Greek *θηριακή* from *θηρίον*, a beast.] And when the devil brings to your memory the good deeds you have done, to make you think highly of yourself and be proud, set over against them your evil deeds, remembering your past sins, as did



the Apostle St. Paul. Not to be puffed up and grow vain over his great virtues, and his having been rapt to the third heaven and the greatness of the revelations that he had heard, he says: *I who before was a blasphemer, and a persecutor of the servants of God and of the name of Christ! Ah, I am not worthy of the name of Apostle, since I have persecuted the Church of God* (I Tim. i. 3; I Cor. xv. 9). This is an excellent counterpoise and very good countermine against this temptation.

On those words that the Archangel St. Gabriel said to the Prophet Daniel: *Son of man, understand what I wish to say to thee* (Dan. viii. 17), St. Jerome says: "Those holy prophets, Daniel, Ezechiël, and Zachary, with the high and continual revelations that they had, seemed to be already enrolled among the choirs of angels; but that they might not exalt themselves therein above their station and become proud and vain, taking themselves now for beings of an angelic superior nature, the angel warned them on the part of God to remember the frailty and weakness of their natural condition, calling them *sons of men*." Thus they were to recognize that they were weak and miserable men like the rest, and so humble themselves and take themselves for what they were indeed. And we have many examples in ecclesiastical and secular history of saints and illustrious men, kings, emperors, and pontiffs, who practised this method, keeping an attendant to remind them at times that they were but men, that so they might dwell in humility and escape being vain.

It is told of our Father Francis Borgia that while he was Duke of Gandia a holy man counseled him, if he wished to advance greatly in the service of God, not to let any day pass without thinking for some time of something that might make for his shame and self-abasement. He took the advice so much to heart that, from the time that he gave himself to the practice of mental prayer, he spent daily the two first hours of his prayer in this knowledge and

depreciation of himself; and all that he heard or read or saw served him to this purpose of self-humiliation and confusion. And besides he had another devotion that helped him very much. Every morning that he rose, the first thing he did was to kneel down and kiss the ground three times, to remember that he was earth and dust, and to that must return. The good that he drew down from this practice is apparent in the great example of humility and holiness that he has left us.

Let us, then, follow this counsel; let no day pass without our spending some portion of our meditation in thinking of something that may turn to our shame and confusion. And let us not stop or grow weary of this exercise until we feel that we have drunk into our very soul a hearty depreciation and disparagement of ourselves, and confusion and shame before the majesty of God at sight of our baseness and misery. We have great need of this, inasmuch as our pride is so great and the inclination we have to be regarded and made much of so strong, that, if we do not go on continually with this practice, every hour we shall find ourselves lifted up above ourselves like a cork on water, since we are puffer and lighter than any cork. We must always go on repressing and putting down this swelling of pride in ourselves, by looking at our feet, at our foul and lowly condition, for thus is drowned all the noise of vanity and pride. Let us remember that parable of the fig tree in the Gospel, how the master wished to cut it down because for three years it had borne no fruit, and the gardener said: "Sir, leave it alone for this year at least, till I dig and spread dung about it; and if then it bear not fruit, thou shalt cut it down." Do you, then, dig round about this dry and barren fig tree of your soul and spread about it the dung of your sins and miseries, since there is plenty of that, and therewith it will bear fruit and become fertile.

To animate us more to this exercise, and that none may take occasion to abandon it on any false apprehensions,

two things are to be observed. First, let no one think that this exercise is only for beginners; it is also for ancient and advanced and very perfect men, since we see that they practised it, and even the Apostle St. Paul practised it. Secondly, we must understand that this is no sad or melancholy exercise, nor a cause of trouble and uneasiness; rather it brings with it great peace and quiet, content and cheerfulness, how many soever be the faults and miseries that one knows in oneself, even though one clearly knows oneself to be so worthless as to deserve the abhorrence and contempt of all, because when this knowledge comes of true humility, the pain is accompanied by such sweetness and satisfaction that one would not wish to be without it.

Other pains and annoyances that people feel at seeing in themselves so many faults and imperfections are a temptation of the devil, whose aim it is on the one hand to make us think that we have got humility; and on the other hand, if he could, he would also wish to make us lose our trust in God and go jaded and discouraged in His service. If we had to stop short at the knowledge of our weakness and misery, we should find occasion enough to be sad and disconsolate; but we must not stop there, but pass on at once to the consideration of the goodness and mercy and liberality of God, and to the great love that He bears us, and all that He has suffered for us; and in that we must put all our confidence. And thus what might have been an occasion of discouragement and sadness when you looked at yourself, serves to strengthen and animate you, and becomes an occasion of greater joy and comfort, when you look at God. A man looks at himself and sees nothing but matter for weeping; but looking at God, he trusts in His goodness, without fear of seeing himself abandoned for all the many faults and imperfections and miseries that he sees in himself, because the goodness and mercy of God, on which he fixes his eyes and his heart, exceeds and surpasses infinitely all that. And with this consideration rooted in his innermost

being, he despairs of himself as of a broken reed, but has ever a firm hope and confidence in God, according to that saying of Daniel: *Not in confidence of our own righteous doings, do we prostrate and lay our prayers before Thy face, but in confidence of Thy many mercies* (Dan. ix. 18).

### CHAPTER XIII

#### *Of the Second Degree of Humility, Explaining in What It Consists*

THE second degree of humility, says St. Bonaventure, is a desire to be held cheap by others—"love to be unknown and counted for nothing"—*ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari*—a desire that others shall neither know you nor esteem you, nor make any account of you. If we were well grounded in the first degree of humility, we should have gone a long way towards gaining the second. If we really held ourselves cheap, we should make no great difficulty about others' likewise holding us cheap, rather we should be glad of it. Would you see that? says St. Bonaventure. We are all naturally glad when the rest of the world falls in with our opinion and feels as we do. Now if that is so, why are we not glad that others should hold us cheap? Do you know why? It is because we do not hold ourselves so; we are not of that way of thinking. On those words of Job: *I have sinned, and really offended, and have not received the punishment that I deserved* (Job xxxiii. 27), St. Gregory says: "Many they are that speak ill of themselves with their lips, saying that they are some thus, and some that, but they do not believe it, for if anyone tells them the same things, or even less, they cannot bear it." These people, when they speak ill of themselves, do not speak with sincerity. They do not think so in their heart, as Job thought when he spoke as above in the text. Job said this in all sincerity from his heart; but these people, says



St. Gregory, only humble themselves with their lips exteriorly, but in their heart they have no humility. They wish to appear humble, but have no mind to be so; for if they desired it in sincerity, they would not feel it so much when another rebuked them and admonished them of some fault; they would not excuse themselves, nor stand on their defense as they do, nor be troubled as they are troubled.

Cassian relates how there came a monk to the Abbot Serapion, who in his habit, demeanor, and words made great show of humility and self-contempt, and never came to an end of speaking ill of himself, how he was such a great sinner and so wicked as not to deserve this common air or the earth on which he trod. He would not sit down except on the ground, much less would he consent to their washing his feet. The Abbot Serapion after dinner began to speak of spiritual things, according to his custom, and the guest came in for his share. He gave him some good advice with great love and tenderness, telling him that since he was young and strong, he should contrive to live in his cell and work with his hands to gain his bread according to the rule of monks, and not go wandering idle round the cells of others. So much did that monk resent this admonition and advice that he could not dissemble his feelings, but showed them externally by the look he put on. Then the Abbot Serapion said to him: "How now, sonny, to this moment you have been telling us so many serious evil things of yourself, matter of much discredit and ignominy, and now on one gentle plain piece of advice like this, which contains in it nothing insulting, or any affront, but much love and charity, you have got indignant and changed countenance so that there is no mistaking your feelings. Were you waiting, perchance, upon these evil things that you said of yourself, to hear from our mouth: *The just is the first accuser of himself* (Prov. xviii. 17); that is why he speaks ill of himself? Did you want us to praise you, and take you for a just and good man?"

Ah, says St. Gregory, how often it is this that we are aiming at with our pieces of hypocrisy and pretended humility; we want to appear humble, which really is great pride. We humble ourselves to get praise. Otherwise, pray, why do you say of yourself what you do not want others to believe? If you say it from your heart and are acting honestly, you must want others to believe you and take you for what you say you are; if you do not want that, you show clearly that you have no mind for humiliations. The Wise Man says: *There are some who humble themselves in pretense, and there in the depths of their heart they are full of pride and deceit* (Ecclus. xix. 23). For what greater deceit can there be than to seek after the honor and esteem of men by means of humility? And what greater pride can there be than to aim at being made much of as a humble man? To seek praises for humility, says St. Bernard, is not the virtue of humility, but a perversion and undoing of the same. What greater perversion could there be than that! What could be more unreasonable than to wish to be thought better for putting on a worse appearance? From the evil that you say of yourself you wish to appear good and be regarded accordingly. What course could be more unworthy and more irrational! St. Ambrose in reprehension of this says: "Many have the appearance of humility, but have not the virtue of humility; many seek it in external appearance, but inwardly contradict it."

So great is our pride, and the inclination we have to be regarded and esteemed, that we seek out a thousand means and invent a thousand contrivances to this end. Directly sometimes, at other times indirectly, we are always trying to draw the water to our mill. St. Gregory says that it is the way of the proud, when they think that they have said or done anything well, to ask others who saw or heard them to tell them of their faults, that they may speak well of them. This asking to be told these faults has the look

of humility, but it is no humility at all; it is pride, because their only aim therein is to attract praise to themselves. At other times a man starts finding fault with what he has done, declaring himself much dissatisfied with it, hoping to draw his hearer thereby, and get him to excuse the performance, and say: "Really it was very well done, and you have no reason for dissatisfaction." A very grave and spiritual religious man used to call this sort of humility, "humility with a hook," for with this hook you are seeking to extract praise from your companion. A preacher has just come down from the pulpit, very well satisfied and pleased with his sermon; and asks a friend to tell him his faults. All this is a piece of pretense and hypocrisy. You do not think that there were any faults; your object is that they may speak well of the sermon and fall in with your idea of it; and that you listen to right willingly. But if it happens that your friend tells you plainly of some fault, you have no stomach for that; on the contrary you defend yourself; and sometimes it goes so far that you judge your candid friend to be wanting in understanding, and not to be one who should have any say in the matter—because he quarrels with what you take to be a foregone conclusion. All this is pride and love of reputation; that is what you want to extract from these pretended acts of humility. At other times, when we cannot cover up our fault, we acknowledge it plainly, that the honor which we lose by the fault, we may recover by this humble confession. At other times, says St. Bernard, we exaggerate our faults, and say even more than is true, that others seeing that it is neither possible nor credible that the thing should be so bad as that, may think that there cannot have been any fault in the matter at all, and may put it all down to our humility; thus by exaggerating and saying more than is true we think to cover up what is true. With a thousand artifices and intricacies we contrive to disguise and cover up our pride under the cloak of humility.

Herein by the way you will see, says St. Bernard, what an excellent and precious thing humility is, and how base and hideous is pride. See what a lofty and glorious thing humility is, since pride itself seeks to avail itself of it and cover itself therewith. And see what a base and shameful thing is pride, since it dares not walk abroad with face uncovered, but must go disguised and covered up under the cloak of humility. How angry and hurt you would be, if your neighbors understood that you were aiming and desiring to be esteemed and praised! They would take you for a proud man, which is the worst light in which you could be placed, and therefore you aim at covering up your pride under a show of humility. But why are you willing to be what you are ashamed to appear? If you would be ashamed and angry at others' understanding that you sought to be praised and made much of, why are you not ashamed of yourself for seeking it? The evil that there is therein lies in your seeking it, not in others' understanding that you seek it. And if you feel shame at men's understanding it, why do you not feel the same at God's understanding and seeing it? *Thine eyes, O Lord, have beheld mine imperfection* (Psalm cxxxviii. 16).

All this befalls us because we are not well grounded in the first degree of humility, and so are so far from the second. In this matter we must fall back upon first principles. The first thing required of us is a knowledge of our own misery and nothingness. From that profound self-knowledge there must arise in us a very low conceit of ourselves, a disparaging and making small account of ourselves; and that is the first degree of humility; thence we have to ascend to the second degree. Thus it is not enough that you make small account of yourself; it is not enough that you speak ill of yourself, even though you so speak sincerely and from your heart and really mean it; you must contrive to get so far as to rejoice at others' also thinking of you exactly what you think and say of yourself, and



their running you down and making small account of you. St. John Climacus says: He is not humble who disparages himself and speaks ill of himself, for who is there who will not take things well from himself? But he is humble who in peace and composure rejoices at being disparaged, and illtreated by others. It is good that a man should always speak ill of himself, saying that he is a proud fellow, lazy, impatient, negligent, and careless; but the better thing would be for him to keep those things back for others to say them. If you desire that others should think the same and hold you in that rank and under that figure, and you rejoice at hearing these things when occasion offers, that is true humility.

#### CHAPTER XIV

##### *Of Some Degrees and Steps Whereby to Mount to the Perfection of This Second Degree of Humility*

**B**ECAUSE this second degree of humility belongs to the most practical and difficult part of the practice of this virtue, we will divide it as some saints divide it, and make of it four degrees or steps, that thus, little by little, and as it were counting our paces, we may mount to that perfection of humility which this degree requires. The first step is not to desire to be honored and esteemed by men, but rather fly from everything that points to honor and reputation. We have books full of examples of saints who were so far from desiring to be courted and esteemed by the world that they fled from honors and dignities and from all occasions that might bring upon them esteem in the eyes of men, looking upon it as a deadly enemy. Of this the first example is given us by Christ our Redeemer and Master, Who, understanding that they wanted to come and elect Him king for the miracle of the five loaves and two fishes (John vi. 15), fled away, not being Himself in any

danger from such high estate, but to give us an example. And, for the same reason, when He manifested the glory of His most holy body to the three disciples in His admirable Transfiguration, He bade them tell no one till after His death and glorious Resurrection (Mark vii. 36). And when He gave sight to the blind and worked other miracles, He charged them to keep it secret, all to give us an example to fly from the honor and esteem of men, for the great danger there is in it of vanity and ruin.

In the chronicles of the order of blessed St. Francis it is told how, when Brother Giles heard of the fall of Brother Elias—who had been Minister General and a great scholar, and was then an apostate and excommunicate because he had taken the side of the emperor, Frederick II, in rebellion against the Church—he, Brother Giles, threw himself on the ground on hearing of these things, and clutched it hard. Being asked why he did that, he answered: “I want to go down as low as I can, since he has fallen from mounting high.” Gerson applies to this effect the fiction of poets about the giant Anteus, son of Earth, who, wrestling with Hercules, every time that he was thrown to earth recovered new strength, and so could not be overcome; but Hercules, taking account of the situation, lifted him up, and so cut off his head. This, says Gerson, is what the devil tries to do with the praises, honors, and esteem of the world, to lift us up, so to make us lose our heads and have the greater fall; therefore the truly humble man casts himself on the earth of his self-knowledge, and therefore dreads and shuns so much anything like being lifted up and esteemed.

The second step, says St. Anselm, is to bear with patience contemptuous treatment at the hands of other people; to take in good part any occasion that offers of your seeming to be undervalued and despised. We are not speaking now of desire of injuries and affronts, and going out of your way to seek them, and delighting and rejoicing in them;

of that we will treat afterwards, as it is a high point of perfection. What we are saying is that at least when occasion offers of something that makes for your discredit, you should bear it with patience, if not with joy, in accordance with that saying of the Wise Man: *All that cometh in thy way, although it be very contrary to thy liking and sensuality, take it well, and though it hurt thee, suffer it with humility and patience* (Ecclus. ii. 4). This is a very great means for attaining to humility and keeping it. Just as honor and the esteem of men is an occasion for pride and vanity, and therefore the saints fly from it so much, so all that makes for our disparagement and discredit is an excellent means to attain humility, and keep it and grow in it.

St. Lawrence Justinian says that humility is like a brook or stream that in winter rises to a great flood and is low in summer; so humility dwindles away in prosperity, and grows in adversity. Many are the occasions that present themselves to us for this every day, and we shall have fine exercise in humility if we are attentive and carefully on the alert to profit by them. That holy man (Å Kempis) well says: "What pleases others shall go forward; what pleases you shall make no way at all. What others say shall be listened to; what you say shall go for nothing. Others shall ask and receive; you shall ask and not obtain. Others shall be great in the mouths of men; of you no account shall be taken. To others this or that business shall be committed; you shall be judged no good for anything. Over this, nature will sometimes repine; but it will be a great point gained if you suffer it in silence." Let everyone take account of himself and run through the particular occasions that may and commonly do occur, and see how he behaves in them. See how you behave when an order is given you imperiously and peremptorily; see how you take it when they warn or reprove you for some fault; see how you feel when you fancy that the superior has not much confidence in you, but on the contrary is reserved in

dealing with you. St. Dorotheus says: Every occasion that offers of this sort, take it as a remedy and medicine to cure and heal your pride, and pray to God for him who offers you this occasion as for the physician of your soul, and be convinced that he who hates these things hates humility.

The third step that we have to mount is not to be glad or take any satisfaction when we are praised and thought highly of by men. This is more difficult than the former. St. Augustine says: "Though it is easy to do without praise, and not mind when we are not praised or honored, when that does not come in our way; yet not to be glad and take satisfaction in it when people do praise and show appreciation of us, is very difficult"—*Si cuiquam facile est laude carere dum denegatur, difficile est ea non delectari cum offertur*. St. Gregory treats this point very well on those words of Job: *If I have looked at the sun when it shone, and the moon when it came out bright, and the heart was glad within me* (Job xxxi. 26). St. Gregory says that Job means to say that he did not rejoice nor take any vain satisfaction in the praises and good opinion of men; such is the meaning of looking at the sun when it shines, and the moon when it comes out very bright: it means a man's looking at the good name and reputation that he has in regard of men and their praises, and delighting and taking satisfaction in that. He goes on to say that there is this difference between the proud and the humble, that the proud rejoice when men praise them and, though the good that they say of them be all a lie, still they rejoice, because they take no account of what they are truly and in the sight of God. All they aim at is being regarded and esteemed by men, and so they rejoice and revel in that, as a man does when he gains the end that he aims at. But when a man who is truly humble of heart sees that they are praising him and thinking and speaking well of him, he then humbles and is ashamed of himself, according to that text of the prophet: *Exaltatus autem humiliatus sum*



*nimis* (Psalm lxxxvii. 16)—“When they praised me, I then humbled myself the more, and was in greater shame and fear.” And with reason, for he fears that he may be all the more punished by God for not having the good qualities that he is praised for; or if perchance he has them, he fears lest his reward and recompense be paid in these praises, and they say to him afterwards: *Thou hast received in thy lifetime the reward of thy works* (Luke xvi. 25).

Thus that whence the proud take occasion to flatter their pride and vanity, namely, the praises of men, the same gives occasion to the humble to confound and humble themselves the more. And this, says St. Gregory, is the meaning of the Wise Man, when he says: *As silver is proved in the melting pot, and gold in the crucible, so is a man proved in the mouth of him who praises him* (Prov. xxvii. 21). The silver and gold, if it is bad, is consumed in the fire; but if it is good, is clarified and purified the more. So, says the Wise Man, is a man proved by his praises. If, when he is praised and thought highly of, the man is lifted up and grows vain with the praises that fill his ears, he is no good gold or silver, but false metal, since the crucible of the tongue consumes him; but he who on hearing his own praises thence takes occasion to humble himself and be the more ashamed, is gold and silver of the finest, since he is not consumed by the fire of praises, but the more purified and clarified thereby, inasmuch as he is more humble and ashamed of himself. Take this, then, for a sign if you are making progress in virtue and humility or not, since the Holy Ghost gives it to us as such. See if you are annoyed when they praise and value you or if you take pleasure and satisfaction therein, and then you will see whether you are gold or tinsel. We read of our Father Francis Borgia that nothing gave him so much pain as to see himself honored as a saint or servant of God. Someone asked him once why he was so much afflicted thereat, since he neither desired nor contrived it. He answered that he

reckoned he should have to give an account to God for it, he being such a different person from what he was taken for, which is just what we have just been saying from St. Gregory. So we should be so well grounded in self-knowledge that the winds of praises and human esteem should have no power to lift us up and draw us out of our nothingness. Rather it is then we should be more ashamed and confounded, seeing how false those praises are, and that there is in us none of that virtue that they praise, nor are we such as the world proclaims us and we ought to be.

## CHAPTER XV

### *Of the Fourth Step, Which Is to Desire to Be Run Down, and Go for Little or Nothing, and to Rejoice Therein*

THE fourth step to arrive at the perfection of humility is to desire to be run down and go for little or nothing amongst men, and to rejoice in ignominy, affronts, and insults. "The truly humble man," says St. Bernard, "is he who desires to be held cheap, not for a humble man but for a good-for-nothing, and rejoices in being so reputed by others." This is the second degree of humility, and in it consists the perfection thereof; and therefore, he says, humility is compared to spikenard, a small herb and sweet-smelling, according to the text of Canticle. *My spikenard hath given forth its odor* (Cant. i. 11); for then does the odor of this spikenard travel abroad and spread to others when you not only hold yourself cheap, but wish and desire that others also should despise you and hold you cheap.

St. Bernard observes that there are two sorts of humility: one in the understanding, which is when a man, studying himself and seeing his misery and vileness, thinks little of himself and judges himself to be worthy of all contempt and dishonor; the other in the will, which is when one wishes to be held cheap by others, and desires to be

despised and set at naught by all. In Christ our Redeemer, he says, there was not that former humility of the understanding, for Christ could not hold Himself cheap or worthy of contempt and dishonor, because He understood Himself right well and knew that He was true God and equal to the Father. *He took it not for a kind of usurpation to hold himself equal to God the Father, and nevertheless made little of himself and demeaned himself to taking the form of a servant* (Phil. ii. 6-7). But He had the second humility, that of heart and will, since for the great love that He bore us He chose to abase and degrade Himself and appear vile and contemptible before men. And so He says: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt. xi. 29) and of will. But in us both humilities must have place, for the first without the second is false and deceitful. To wish to appear and be counted by others different from what you really are, is falsehood and deceit. He who is truly humble and in all sincerity has a poor opinion of himself, despising himself and thinking little of himself, should rejoice that others also despise him and think little of him.

This is what we have to learn from Christ. See how heartily and with great good will He embraced insults and affronts for love of us. Not content with abasing and demeaning Himself by becoming man and taking the form and habit of a servant—He Who is Lord of heaven and earth—He would take the form and habit of a sinner. The Apostle says: *God sent his Son in the disguise and likeness of a sinful man* (Rom. viii. 3). He could not take sin, because that could not have place in Him; but He took the brand and mark of a sinner, since He chose to be circumcised as a sinner, baptized among sinners and publicans as though He were one of them, and made less account of than Barabbas and judged far worse and more unworthy of life than he. Finally, so great was the desire that He had for suffering affronts, scorn, and reproaches for love

of us that He thought that hour long a-coming in which, inebriated with love, He was to be stripped naked like another Noah exposed to the scorn of men. *I have a baptism wherewith to be baptized*, a baptism of blood, *and how I long for it to be carried into effect! With desire I have desired that this hour should come for eating this passover with you* (Luke xii. 50; xxii. 15), in which there shall be seen nothing but marks of scorn and reproaches never witnessed before, buffets and slaps on the face given as to a slave, His face spat upon as though He were a blasphemer, His person clad in a white garment like a fool, and with purple like a mock king, and above all, the scourges, a punishment for robbers and felons, and the torment of the Cross in company with thieves, which at that time was the most shameful and ignominious style of death that there was in the world. This is what with great desire Christ our Redeemer was desiring. *I was expecting reproaches and affronts*, says the prophet in His name (Psalm lxviii. 21), as a man expects a thing very agreeable and much to his liking, for of such things is expectation and hope, as fear is of things sad and painful. And the Prophet Jeremy says: *He shall be glutted with reproaches* (Lam. iii. 30). There He was, desiring that hour to be glutted with reproaches, marks of scorn and insult, as though it were a thing He greatly hungered after, and was very much to His liking and quite to His taste—for love of us.

Now since the Son of God desired with so great desire these marks of contempt and insult and took them so willingly and eagerly for our love, though He deserved them not, it will be no great thing for us, worthy as we are of all contempt and disdain, to desire for His love to be held at least for what we are and to rejoice in receiving the ignominious and contemptuous treatment that we deserve, as did the Apostle St. Paul when he said: *Wherefore I rejoice in my infirmities, in injuries, affronts, privations, persecutions and distresses for Christ* (II Cor. xii. 10). And



writing to the Philippians, speaking of his imprisonment, he asks them to share the joy that he felt at seeing himself thus put in chains for Christ (Phil. i. 7). He felt such abundance of joy in the persecutions and hardships that he suffered, that he wished to share that joy with his companions, and so he invited them to be partakers of his joy. This is the milk that the holy apostles sucked at the breast of Christ. And so we read of them that they went glad and rejoicing when they took them in fetters before presidents and synagogues, and reckoned it a great consolation and favor of God to be found worthy to suffer affronts and injuries for the name of Christ (Acts v. 41). In this the saints who came after them imitated them, as did St. Ignatius [of Antioch], who, when they were taking him to martyrdom at Rome with many insults and injuries, went with great joy, and said: "Now I begin to be a disciple of Christ."

This is what our Father wished us to imitate, and charged us therewith in words of great emphasis and weight. "They who enter and live in the Society," he says, "must take notice and reflect before our Creator and Lord to what a degree it aids and advances spiritual life to abhor entirely and not in part all that the world loves and embraces, and to take up with all the strength that we can command whatever Christ our Lord has loved and embraced. And as worldly men, who follow the world, love and seek with great diligence honors, fame, and the reputation of a great name on earth, as the world teaches them, so those who walk in spirit and follow Christ our Lord in earnest, love and desire intensely everything to the contrary, that is to say, to be clad in the same dress and livery as their Lord for His divine love and reverence; in so much that, when there is no offense of His Divine Majesty, nor any sin imputable to their neighbor, they would desire to suffer injuries, false witnesses, and insults, and to be held and accounted fools, without themselves giving any

occasion for the same, out of desire to look like and imitate in some sort Jesus Christ our Creator and Lord." In this rule there is summed up all that we can possibly say on humility. This it is to have left and abhorred in good earnest the world and that which is the subtlest thing in it, to wit, the craving and desire to be highly regarded and well thought of. This it is to be dead to the world and true religious; for as those in the world desire honor and reputation, and rejoice therein, so we should desire disgrace and marks of contempt, and rejoice therein. This it is to be of the Company of Jesus and Companions of Jesus, that we should keep Him company, not only in name, but in His slights and insults, and be clad in His livery, being outraged and despised by the world with Him and for Him, and be glad and rejoice therein for His love. Thou, O Lord, wert publicly proclaimed a wicked man and set between two thieves as a malefactor; allow not me to be proclaimed a good man, for it is not reasonable that the servant should be held in more honor than his Lord, and the disciple than the Master. Since, O Lord, they persecuted Thee and despised Thee, let them persecute me, despise me, insult me, that so I may imitate Thee, and show myself Thy disciple and companion. Father Francis Xavier used to say that he took it for an unworthy thing, for a man who ought ever to bear in mind the insults they offered to Christ our Lord, to take pleasure in any honor and veneration that men paid to him.

## CHAPTER XVI

*That the Perfection of Humility and Other Virtues Lies  
in Doing the Acts Thereof with Delight and  
Pleasure, and How Important This Is  
for Perseverance in Virtue*

IT is the common doctrine of philosophers that the perfection of a virtue lies in doing the acts thereof with delight and pleasure. Treating of the signs whereby it may be known whether anyone has gained a habit of any virtue, they say it is when he does the acts of that virtue with readiness, facility, and delight. He who has acquired the habit of any art or science, does the acts thereof with the greatest readiness and facility. Thus we see that he who is a musician, having acquired by this time the habit of music, plays a stringed instrument with the greatest facility and readiness, and need not prepare it beforehand nor be thinking of what he is doing, so that he plays right well while thinking of something else. In the same way does he the acts of a virtue who has acquired the habit of that virtue. Thus, if you wish to see whether you have acquired the virtue of humility, see first whether you do the acts of that virtue with readiness and facility; for if you feel repugnance and difficulty in the occasions that offer, it is a sign that you have not gained the virtue perfectly. And if to meet these occasions well you need anticipations and considerations, you are well on the road to gain the perfection of that virtue, but it must be said that this is a sign that as yet you have not gained it. You are like a man who, to play a stringed instrument, must needs go thinking where he is to put this finger and where that, and remembering the rules that have been given him. He is well on the way to learn how to play, but it is a sign that he has not yet acquired the habit of music, for he who has acquired that habit has no need to think of anything of

that sort to play well. So Aristotle says in his philosophy: "He who has perfectly acquired the habit of any art, finds it so easy to do the acts thereof that he has no need to set himself thinking or deliberating how to do them, to do them well." *Arte perfecta non deliberat*. This moves philosophers to say that it is in sudden and indeliberate acts that a man's virtue is known. Virtue is not known by acts that are done with a deal of study, but by acts that are done offhand.

Philosophers have yet more to say. Plutarch gives two signs to show when one has quite acquired a virtue. One of these signs is by the man's dreams; so writes a great philosopher named Zeno. If when you are asleep and dreaming you have no bad movements, no unseemly imaginations, or if when they come you take no satisfaction in them, but rather are annoyed, and resist as though you were awake the temptation and pleasure that comes in sleep, it is a sign that virtue has taken root in your soul, not only the will being subject to reason, but even the sensible appetite and imaginations. Thus, when carriage-horses are well broken in, even though the driver slackens the reins and goes to sleep, still the horses keep the right road; in like manner, says this philosopher, those who have a perfect habit of virtue and have tamed and subjected all their animal tendencies and instincts, go the right way even when asleep. St. Augustine also teaches this doctrine. Some servants of God have such a love and affection for virtue and the observance of the commandments of God and such an abhorrence of vice, and are so well formed and accustomed to resist temptations in their waking hours, that they resist them even in dreams. We read of Father Francis Xavier in his Life, that in a temptation or illusion which came upon him sleeping he resisted with such an effort that by the effort he threw up three or four mouthfuls of blood. In this way some explain that saying of St. Paul: *Waking or sleeping, we still live with him* (I Thess.



v. 10), in this sense, that not only living or dying we still live with Christ, which is the common interpretation, but that the fervent servants of God must ever live with Christ, not only when they are awake, but also when they are asleep and dreaming.

Philosophers go further and say that the third condition or mark whereby it is known when a man has perfectly acquired and gained a virtue, is when he does the acts thereof *delectabiliter*, with delight and satisfaction. This is the chief sign, and in it consists the perfection of the virtue. If, then, you wish to see whether you have gained the perfection of the virtue of humility, examine yourself by the rule that we gave in the last chapter; see whether you rejoice as much in affronts and insults as worldly people in marks of honor and esteem.

Besides the fact of this disposition's being necessary for the attainment of the perfection of any virtue, there is in it another very substantial advantage, that it has an important bearing on the durability and permanence of the virtue. So long as we do not attain to doing virtuous actions with satisfaction and cheerfulness, it will be a very difficult thing to persevere in virtue. St. Dorotheus says that this was the common teaching of the ancient Fathers. They took it for a well-established and certain fact, that he cannot go on long who does not do things gladly and cheerfully. It may well be that for some limited time you may keep silence and conduct yourself with modesty and recollection; but till such behavior proceeds from the innermost heart and becomes to you, as we may say, connatural by good habituation, so that you do the thing with pleasure and satisfaction, you will not carry on long in what will be an artificial and violent course. It is a thing that we may see with our own eyes that nothing violent is lasting—*nihil violentum perpetuum*. It is, therefore, very important for us to exercise ourselves in acts of virtue until the virtue is drunk in and deeply rooted in the heart, and looks

like a thing of one's own and, as they say, "comes natural" to us, and so we begin to do the works of the virtue cheerfully as having a taste for them; so we shall be able to get some warrant and security for our perseverance therein. This is what the prophet says: *Blessed is the man whose whole content and joy and delight is in the law of the Lord*, and such are his pleasures and diversions, *for he shall bear fruit of good works, like a tree planted by the running waters* (Psalm i. 2-3).

## CHAPTER XVII

### *A Further Explanation of the Perfection That Must Be Secured to Mount to This Second Degree of Humility*

ST. JOHN CLIMACUS adds another point to what has been said, and says that as the proud so much love honor and reputation that, to be more honored and esteemed by men, they often pretend and imply their possession of advantages which really they have not, as higher nobility, ampler fortune, better abilities and parts than what is actually theirs, so it is a very high humility that carries a man to such a desire of being despised and made naught of as at times, for that purpose, to pretend and suggest his having defects which he has not, that so he may be made less account of. We have an example of this, he says, in that Father Simeon, who, hearing that the governor of the province was coming to pay him a visit as being a famous man and a saint, took in his hand a piece of bread and cheese, and sitting at the door of his cell began to eat it after the fashion of one who was out of his wits. The governor, seeing this, despised him, at which he was much pleased, as having gained the very thing he wanted. We read the like examples of other saints, as of St. Francis, when he set himself to knead mud with his feet, to escape the honor and reception which they were preparing for

him; and of Brother Juniper, when he took to swinging with the boys for the same reason.

These saints had before their eyes the fact that the world despised the Son of God, the Sovereign and Infinite Goodness. Seeing the world to be so lying and so false, so deluded as not to recognize such a clear light as was the Son of God, and honor what was most truly honorable, they conceived such a hatred and abhorrence of the world and its good opinion that they rejected what it approves, and abhorred and despised what it values and loves. So they are very careful to shun being valued and esteemed by a power that has despised its God and Lord, and take their being despised by the world in His world in His company and for His sake for a great mark of their being loved by Christ. That is why the saints had such a taste for the reproaches, affronts, and insults of the world, and made such efforts to earn this contempt. It is true, says St. John Climacus, that many of these things were done by a particular inspiration of the Spirit of God, and so are rather for our admiration than for our imitation; nevertheless, though we do not come to put in practice those holy follies of the saints, we should aim at imitating them in the great love and desire they had of being despised and made small account of.

St. Diadochus goes on to say that there are two sorts of humility. The first is that of middle-class souls, who continue making progress, while they are at the same time under stress, assailed by thoughts of pride and evil impulses, though by the grace of God they contrive to resist them and cast them off in humility and shame. The other humility is that of the perfect; it is when the Lord imparts to a soul such light and knowledge of herself that pride seems no longer within the range of possibility, nor do any stirrings of pride and self-elation seem any longer possible. The soul then seems to have humility for part of her very nature—*tunc anima velut naturalem habet humilita-*

*tem.* Though God works great things by her, she is none the more elated on that score, nor thinks any more of herself, but rather holds herself for the least of all. This is the difference, he says, between these two sorts of humility, that the former commonly is attended with pain and a certain sadness and affliction—just what happens in fact in people who have not gained a perfect victory over themselves, but still feel a certain interior repugnance which causes in them pain and distress when any occasion befalls them of being humbled and put down; hence it comes to pass that, though they bear it with patience, they do not bear it with cheerfulness, there still remaining in them some element of repugnance because they have not gone all the way in the overcoming of their passions.

But the second humility is not in any way pained or troubled; rather it is with much cheerfulness that the humble man of this stamp stands in confusion and shame before the Lord, casting himself down and contemning himself, having nothing now about him to offer resistance, since he has overcome and subjected the contrary passions and vices and gained a perfect victory over himself. Hence also it is, says the saint, that they who have only the first humility are troubled and changed with the adversities and prosperities and various happenings of this life; but with them that have the second humility, neither adversity troubles them, nor does prosperity elate them or cause in them any self-conceit or vain complacency. They remain ever in one frame of mind and enjoy great peace and tranquillity, as men who have gained perfection and are superior to all these vicissitudes. There is nothing that can trouble or give pain to a man who desires to be made little of and rejoices therein. What might give him some pain, namely, to be forgotten and undervalued, is the very thing that he desires and that makes for his liking and contentment; what, then, can disturb him or give him pain? If that in which men think to be able to make war on him he finds to



be ground of much peace, who shall be able to rob him of his peace? So, says St. Chrysostom, such a one has found a paradise and a heaven upon earth. Who is better off than the man who finds himself in this state? He is anchored forever in port; free from every squall of wind and enjoying the calm serenity of his own thoughts.

This, then, is the perfection of humility that we must strive to attain. And let it not be made for us an impossibility, since by the grace of God, as St. Augustine says, we can imitate, if we will, not only the saints, but even the Lord of saints, since that same Lord Himself says that we are to learn of Him. *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt. xi. 29). And the Apostle St. Peter says that He gave us an example for us to imitate. *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example to follow in his footsteps* (I Pet. ii. 21). St. Jerome on those words of Christ, *If thou wilt be perfect* (Matt. xix. 21), says that from these words it may be clearly argued that perfection is in our power, since Christ says, *If thou wilt. If thou sayest, I have not the strength, God knoweth well our weakness* (Prov. xxiv. 12); and nevertheless He says, *If thou wilt*, because He stands by to help us, and with His help we can do all things. Jacob saw a ladder, says the saint, that reached from earth to heaven, and by it angels went up and down, and at the end of the ladder, at the top of all, was seated the Almighty, to give a hand to those moving up and to animate us to the labor of the ascent by His presence. Do you, then, make it your endeavor to mount by this ladder and by these steps that we have said; He will give you a hand to reach as far as the top step. To a traveler looking from a distance at an entrance on a height, it seems impossible to get up there, but when he comes near and sees the path well trodden, it becomes to him quite easy.

## CHAPTER XVIII

*Of Some Means to Gain This Second Degree of Humility,  
and Particularly the Example of Christ Our Lord*

TWO manner of means are commonly given for acquiring moral virtues. One is by reasons and considerations apt to convince and animate us thereto; the other is by exercise of the acts of that virtue, as habits are acquired by acts. Beginning with the former kind of means, one of the chiefest and most efficacious considerations that we can make use of to help us to become very humble—or, rather, the chiefest and most efficacious of all—is the example of Christ our Redeemer and Master; we have already said something of it, but there always remains more to say. The whole life of Christ was a most perfect pattern of humility, from His birth to the moment when He expired upon the Cross. St. Augustine dwells particularly on the example He gave us in washing the feet of His disciples (John xiii.) the Thursday of the Supper, when He was now nearing His Passion and death. Christ our Redeemer, says St. Augustine, was not content with the examples of His whole past life, nor with those He was shortly to give in His Passion, now so near, where He was to appear, as Isaias says, *the last of men* (Isaias liii. 3), and as the Royal Prophet David says, *the reproach of men and the outcast of the people* (Psalm xxi. 7); but knowing that the hour was now come in which He was to depart from this world and go to the Father, He would show at the end of His life the great love that he bore to His own. Accordingly He rose from the table, laid aside His garment, girt Himself with a towel, poured water into a basin, and threw Himself down at the feet of His disciples, even those of Judas, and began to wash them with those divine hands, and wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. O great mystery! What is it, Lord, that Thou dost? *Lord, dost*

*Thou wash my feet?* The Lord answered St. Peter: *What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.* He resumed His seat at table and declared the mystery in right good earnest. *Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am: if then I have washed your feet, your Master and Lord, ye also ought to wash one another's feet: for I have given you an example, that as I have done, ye also should do.* This is the mystery, that you should learn to humble yourself as I have humbled Myself. So great on the one hand is the importance of this virtue of humility, and on the other hand so great the difficulty there is in it, that He was not satisfied with the many examples He had given and now was on the point of giving us. He knew well our weakness, He had felt well the pulse of our heart, He quite understood the peccant humor of our disease; therefore He insisted so strongly on this particular and left it among His last directions by His last will and testament, the more to impress it on our hearts.

On those words of Christ: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt. xi. 29), St. Augustine exclaims: "O wholesome doctrine! O Master and Lord of men, men on whom death came in by pride! What is it, O Lord, that Thou wishest us to learn of Thee? 'That I am meek and humble of heart. This it is that thou hast to learn of Me.' Are, then, all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of the Father summed up in this? Is it for this that those treasures are hidden away in Thee, that Thou shouldst tell us as a great thing to come to learn of Thee that Thou art meek and humble of heart? Is it such a great thing to make oneself a little one, that none could ever have learned the lesson, hadst not Thou, great as Thou art, made Thyself a little one?" Yes, says St. Augustine, so great and difficult a thing it is to humble oneself and make little of oneself, that had not even God humbled Himself and made little of Himself, men could never have succeeded in humbling themselves; for there is nothing so

ingrained in men's innermost hearts and nature as this desire to be honored and highly thought of; and thus all this was necessary to make men humble. Such a medicine did the infirmity of our pride require; such a wound, such a remedy. "If this medicine of God having made Himself man and humbled Himself so much for us, does not cure our pride, I know not," says St. Augustine, "what can cure it." If the sight of the Lord of Majesty so abased and humbled is not enough to make us ashamed of desiring to be honored and thought highly of and make us count it a gain to be despised and brought low as He was, I know not what can be enough. And so the Abbot Gueric, struck with admiration and profound conviction of so great an example of humility, cries out and says that is reasonable that we should utter and arrive thence at this resolution: "Thou hast conquered, O Lord, Thou has conquered my pride; Thou hast bound me hand and foot by Thy example: I surrender and give myself over to be Thy bondsman forever."

There is also another marvelous thought to this effect proposed by the glorious Bernard. He says the Son of God saw that noble creatures, high-born and capable of beatitude, whom God had created, were lost by seeking to be like to Him. God created the angels, and at once Lucifer sought to be like unto God. *I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit on the Mountain of Testimony on the side of the north, I will mount above the clouds, I will be like the Most High* (Isaias xiv. 13), and he carried others with him. Thereupon God cast them into hell, and of angels they became devils. *But thou hast been hurled down into hell, into the lowest depth of the pit* (Isaias xiv. 15) God created man, and the devil infected him with his leprosy and his venom. *Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil* (Gen. iii. 5). They were smitten with a longing desire at what he said, that they should be like God; they broke His commandment, and



became like to the devil. The Prophet Eliseus said to his servant Giezzi: *Thou hast taken the riches of Naaman, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to thee and to all thy posterity for ever* (IV Kings v. 27). Such was God's sentence upon man, that, as he willed to have the riches of Lucifer, which was the guilt of his pride, the leprosy also should infect him, which was the punishment of that sin. Here, then, you see how man also was lost and made like the devil because he wished to be like God. What will it be well for the Son of God to do, seeing His eternal Father jealous and standing to arms for His honor? I see, He says, that My Father is losing His creatures on My account. The angels sought to be as I am, and were lost; man also sought to be as I am, and was lost; they all bore envy to Me, and sought to be as I am. Now observe: I will come in such a form, says the Son of God, that henceforth whoever shall seek to be as I am shall not be lost, but saved. For this the Son of God came down from heaven and became man. Oh, blessed, exalted, and glorified be such goodness and mercy, whereby God fell in with the great desire that we have to be like to Him, and now by no lying and falsehood, as the devil spoke, but in truth, and by no pride and wickedness, but with great humility and holiness, we may be like unto God. On those words, *Unto us a child is born* (Isaias ix. 6), the same saint says: "Since God, great as He is, has become a little child for our sake, let us endeavor to humble ourselves and make ourselves little children, that it may not be without profit to us that God has become a little child; for if you do not become as this child, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

## CHAPTER XIX

*Of Some Human Reasons and Considerations That We Have at Hand to Help Us to Be Humble*

FROM the outset of this treatise we have been alleging many reasons and considerations to aid and encourage us to this virtue of humility, saying how it is the root and foundation of all virtues; the short cut to gain them all; the means to preserve them; that if we hold this, we hold them all, and other things to the like effect. But that we may not seem to wish to carry everything by the way of the spirit, it will be well to enumerate some human reasons and considerations, more connatural and proportioned to our weakness, that, being thus convinced, not only by the way of the spirit and perfection, but also even by natural reason, we may animate and dispose ourselves more thoroughly to despise the honor and esteem of the world and take the road of humility. For a purpose so difficult as this we need every inducement we can get, and so it is well to avail ourselves of all. Be this, then, the first point, to set ourselves to consider and examine very leisurely and attentively what manner of thing is this opinion and esteem of men which makes so much war upon us and gives us such matter of thought. Let us look at bulk and weight together, that so we may fix upon what it is, and encourage ourselves to despise it, and not be deluded by it as we are deluded.

Seneca says very well that there are many things which we reckon great, not from any greatness that they have in themselves, but because of our meanness and littleness being such that we take small for great and little for much. He gives the example of the burden that ants carry, which looks great in comparison of the size of their bodies, but is in itself very small. So it is with the honor and esteem of men. Otherwise, I ask you, are you any better for oth-

ers' taking you for a person of consequence, or worse for their making little account of you? Certainly not, St. Augustine says: "Neither is evil made good for being praised and esteemed, nor good made evil for being despised and found fault with. Think of Augustine what you please; what I wish and care for is that my conscience may not accuse me before God." That it is that matters; the rest is vanity, since it neither takes away from you nor brings you in anything. So that holy man (À Kempis) says: "What better is any man for another man's praising him? What each one is in the eyes of God, such he is and no more, says the humble St. Francis"—or rather, the Apostle St. Paul: *It is not he that commends and praises himself that is approved for good, but he whom God commends and praises* (II Cor. x. 18).

St. Augustine makes a good comparison to this purpose. "Pride and the esteem of the world is not greatness, but wind and swelling; and as, when a thing is swollen out, it appears great and is not, so the proud, who are regarded and esteemed of men, appear great but are not, since that is no real greatness, but a swelling." There are convalescents or invalids who appear stout and in good condition, but theirs is no healthy fat, only infirmity and swelling. Such, says St. Augustine, is the applause and esteem of the world; it may bloat you out, but it cannot make you great. If, then, this is the case, as indeed it is, that the opinion and esteem of men is not greatness, but a swelling and infirmity, why do we go about like chameleons, open-mouthed, gulping down wind, thereby to make ourselves swollen out and infirm? It is better for a man to be well though he looks ill, than to be ill and appear well. So also it is better to be a good man, though accounted no good, than to be no good and accounted good. For what will it profit you to be accounted virtuous and spiritual, if you are not so? *Let her works praise her in the gates* (Prov. xxxi. 31). On these words St. Jerome says: "It is not the

vain praises of men, but your own good works, that have to praise you and avail you when you appear at the judgment seat of God."

St. Gregory relates that there was in a monastery in Iconia a monk of whom all had a great opinion as a saint, especially for being very abstemious and penitent. When the hour of his death approached, he called all the monks; they came readily, expecting to hear of him something of edification. But he, trembling and in great distress of mind, was fain by an inward impulse to tell them his state. So he declared to them that he was damned for having been a hypocrite all his life; and when they thought he was fasting and doing great abstinence, all the while he was eating on the sly without anyone's seeing him. And for that, he said, I am now given over to a fearful dragon, who with his tail holds my feet fast tied, and is now putting his head into my mouth to draw out my soul and carry it off with him forever. And so saying he expired, to the great terror of all. What did it profit this wretch to have been taken for a saint?

St. Athanasius compares proud men seeking honors to children running after butterflies. Others compare them to spiders, who disembowel themselves spinning their webs to catch flies, according to Isaias: *They have spun spider's webs* (lix. 5). So the proud man fetches up his inside, as they say, to gain a little human praise. We read of Father Francis Xavier that he felt and always showed a particular hatred and abhorrence of this opinion and esteem of the world; he said it was the cause of great evils and a hindrance to much good. So he was heard to say sometimes with great emotion and groaning: "O opinion and esteem of men, what evils hast thou done, art doing, and will do!"



## CHAPTER XX

*Of Some Other Human Considerations to Help to  
Make Us Humble*

ST. CHRYSOSTOM upon those words of St. Paul: *Not to be high-minded rather than right minded, but to be minded unto sober-mindedness* (Rom. xii. 3), proves very systematically that the proud and arrogant man is not only an evil and sinful man, but stark mad. He quotes to that effect Isaias (xxxii. 6): *The fool shall utter foolish things*; and from the foolish things that he utters you may understand he is a fool. See, then, the follies that the proud and arrogant man gives vent to, and you will see that he is a fool. What is it, then, the first proud creature said, that was Lucifer? *I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit on the Mountain of Testimony on the side of the north, I will mount above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High* (Isaias xiv. 13-14). Was there ever such madness? And in the tenth chapter the prophet puts other words—still more arrogant and insane, of Asur, King of the Assyrians, who boasted that his powerful hand had overcome and subjected all the kings of the earth. *My hand hath found as it were a nest the strength of peoples; and as eggs are gathered that are deserted, so have I gathered in the whole earth, and there was none to move a wing and open his mouth and utter a cry* (Isaias x. 14) “Could madness further go?” asks St. Chrysostom. And he quotes many other words of proud men, plain evidences of their madness. Hearing them, you could not tell whether they were merely the words of a proud man or of a man who was literally mad, so mad and extravagant are they. And we see that, as madmen move us to laughter by the insane things they say and do, so also the proud afford matter of laughter and conversation by the arrogant language they use, redound-

ing to their own praise, by the authoritative demeanor that they assume, the notice that they claim for themselves and their doings, and the high notion they have of them. St. Chrysostom adds that the folly of the proud is worse, and worthy of greater blame and ignominy than that of the born idiot, since in the latter case there is no fault or sin, but in theirs there is. Hence follows another difference between those two kinds of madness, that born idiots inspire compassion and move all beholders to grief and commiseration for their affliction, but the madness of the proud inspires no compassion nor pity, but laughter and scorn.

Thus the proud are mad, and so we treat them as such. As we fall in with what a madman says to keep the peace with him, though in fact the thing is not so, and you do not think it is so, but you have no mind to contradict the man, because he is mad: that is the way we behave with the proud. This humor of pride has such a reign in the world at this day that one can scarcely converse with men without flattering them and saying of them what really is not the case; nor do you take it to be so, because the person you are speaking with has such a passion for being told that his doings give satisfaction and are well thought of, that to satisfy him and gain his good will you find no better expedient than to praise him. This is one of the vanities and follies that the Wise Man says he saw in the world, the wicked being praised for being in high places as if they were good. *I saw the burials of the wicked, who in life were in the holy place, and were praised as though they were good; but that too was vanity* (Eccles. viii. 10). Many a time they praised you for what you had done badly and for that which even to them appeared badly done; and the joke of the thing is that to others they had already told the truth and spoken their real minds, but to you, as the price of giving you satisfaction, sometimes they stickle not at telling a downright lie; at other times they seek cir-

cumlocutions and roundabout expressions, short of lying, to be able to speak well of what they take to be a bad performance. That is, they treat you as a madman, and fall in with what you want said. The person you are speaking to understands that this is your humor and that you delight in being dealt with in this manner. And the tit-bit of the entertainment is, after you have preached or done something of that sort, to tell you that you came out very well, that everybody was much pleased. They treat you thus to keep you well satisfied and gain your good will, as perchance they have need of you. What this serves for is to make you more of a fool; for they praise what you have spoken or done badly, and thereby set you more in the way of doing it another time.

The men of today dare not speak their minds, for they know that truths embitter—*veritas odium parit*. They know that, as a man in a mad frenzy resists medical appliances and spits at the doctor who endeavors to treat his case, so the proud man resists good advice and correction. And therefore men have no mind to tell another what they know he cannot stomach, for no man wishes to buy himself trouble; rather they give him to understand that they think well of what they think a poor performance; and the other is so taken up with himself as to believe them. Hence also it will be seen how true it is that we said in the last chapter, how great vanity and folly it is to take account of the praises of men, since we know that at the present day all that is empty compliments, deceit, flattery, and lying: so that some hence even explain the noun *cumplimiento*, *cumplo y miento*, "He humored and lied," "He lied to humor you."

Moreover, the proud, says St. Chrysostom, are abhorred by all—by God, in the first place, as the Wise Man says: *Every arrogant and proud man is an abomination before God* (Prov. xvi. 5). And of seven things that God abhors, He puts pride in the first place (Prov. vi. 16). And not only

before God, but also before men they are abhorred. *Pride is hateful before God and men* (Ecclus. x. 7). As those who have diseased livers and bowels emit a stench that none can endure, such are the proud (Ecclus. xi. 32). The world itself gives them herein the fee of their pride, punishing them in that which they were aiming at. It all turns out to them the other way about; they think to be regarded and esteemed by all, and they come to be regarded as fools. They look to be sought after by all, and just the other way about—the proud man is by all the world abhorred; abhorred by his betters because he wishes to equal them; abhorred by his equals because he wishes to lord it over them; abhorred by his inferiors because he makes exorbitant demands upon them. Hence servants speak ill of their master and cannot endure him, when he is proud. *Where there is pride, there shall be discredit* (Prov. xi. 2). On the contrary, the humble man is regarded and esteemed, sought and loved by all. As children are very lovable by their goodness, innocence, and simplicity, so, says the glorious St. Gregory, are the humble; such simplicity and plainness of speech, and manner of acting without pretense or duplicity, gains all hearts. Humility is the loadstone which draws hearts to itself; all seem to wish to cherish the humble.

To make an end of persuading us that it is folly to desire and strive after the esteem and good opinion of men, St. Bernard constructs an excellent dilemma, concluding thus: Either it was folly of the Son of God to abase and demean Himself so much as to choose contempt and insult, or it is great folly on our part so much to desire the honor and esteem of men. But it was not folly on the part of the Son of God, nor could it be, though to the world it seemed so. So says St. Paul: *We preach Christ crucified, a scandal to the Jews, and a folly and infatuation to the Gentiles; but to them that are elected to the faith, whether from Jews or Greeks or Gentiles, it is Christ the proof of the omnipo-*



*tence and wisdom of God* (I Cor. i. 23). To the blind and proud heathen it appeared folly on the part of Christ; but to us, who have the light of faith, it appears sovereign wisdom and infinite love. But if this is sovereign wisdom, it follows that ours is folly, and we are the fools for making so much account of the opinion and esteem of men and the honor of the world.

## CHAPTER XXI

*That a Sure Way to Be Regarded and Esteemed by Men  
Is to Give Oneself Up to the Virtue of Humility*

**I**F after all that we have said you are not yet brought to the point of abandoning the fumes and breaking off the aspirations and desires of honor and esteem, but say that after all good credit and reputation is a great thing with men and makes much for edification and other purposes, and that the Wise Man advises us to take care of it: *Have a care of a good name* (Ecclus. xli. 15), I say: "Well, be it so; I am satisfied that you should take care to preserve the good name that you have, and be regarded and greatly esteemed by men; but you must know that you are very much out in the way in which you desire it, even in point of attaining your object, since in that way you will never attain it, but rather the contrary." The sure and safe way whereby without doubt you will come to be regarded and esteemed by men, says St. Chrysostom, is the way of virtue and humility. Take care to be a good religious, the least and humblest of all, and to show yourself such in your behavior on all occasions that offer, and in that way you will be much regarded and esteemed by all. This is the honor of the religious who has left the world; better becomes him the broom in his hand and the poor habit and the lowly and humble dress than the arms and the horse become the knight; and on the other hand the desire to be

regarded and esteemed by men is a great reproach and disgrace to him. As it would be a great reproach and disgrace to leave religion and go back to the world, and rightly would people mock at such a one because *he had put his hand to build and was not able to finish* (Luke xiv. 30), so is the desire and pretense to be regarded and esteemed by men; for this is to go back to the world in heart, since that is the choicest thing in the world, and that it was that you gave up and abandoned when you entered religion.

Would you see clearly what a shameful and shocking thing it is, this desire to be esteemed and honored by men, in anyone who professes to aim at perfection? Let this desire come to light, so that others should get to see what you desire, and you will see how hurt and angry you yourself will be at the thing's getting known. We have a good example of this in the holy Gospel. The evangelists relate how one day the apostles were going with Christ our Redeemer at a little distance from Him, where they thought He would not hear, and they fell to disputing and contending amongst themselves which should be the greater and the chief (Mark ix. 33). When they came to the house in Capharnaum, He asked them: *What is it that you were talking about on the way?* The holy Gospel says that the poor men were so upset and ashamed at seeing their ambitious pretensions discovered that they could not open their mouths to answer Him. Then the Saviour of the world took up the discourse and said to them: Look, My disciples, there in the world, among men who follow its laws, they are held to be great who are in office and command. But in My school it is the other way about; the greater must become the less and be the servant of all. *If anyone wishes to be the first, let him be the last of all, and the servant of all* (Mark ix. 34). In the house of God and religion to be humbled and put down is to be great, and to become the least of all is to be regarded and esteemed more than all. This is honor here in religion. That other that

you aim at is not honor, but dishonor; and in place of gaining regard and esteem you come thereby to forfeit esteem and to be held in least account of all, because you get the name of a proud man, which is the greatest come-down that you can hit upon. By nothing can you lose so much as by the notion's getting abroad that you desire and aim at being regarded and esteemed by men and that you stand on points of honor and are sensitive on those trifles.

St. John Climacus says well that vainglory often brings ignominy on its votaries because it makes them fall into things that lay bare their vanity and ambition, and so incur great reproach and confusion. The proud man does not see that in the things that he says and does to gain esteem he discovers the unmeasured craving of his pride and disgraces himself where he thought to gain credit. St. Bonaventure adds that pride so blinds the understanding that often the more pride a man has, the less is he aware of it himself, and so, like a blind man, the proud man says and does things that he would nowise say or do if he bethought himself, apart from any motive of God or virtue, but merely for the sake of that same honor and esteem that he desires. How often does it happen that a man is resentful and complains because they have taken no account of him on such and such an occasion or because they have given the preference to another in such or such an appointment when he fancies that it ought to have fallen to him, and that they have done him an injury thereby and it will redound to his dishonor and discredit and be a stigma upon him, and that others will not fail to see and take notice of it, and under color of this pretense he lets all the world know his mind. Thereby, in point of fact, he is all the more noted and discredited, being taken for a proud man and a man that stands on points of honor, which here in religion is a thing very much disliked; whereas if he dissembled his feelings on this occasion and put himself out of account

and let superiors do what they would, he would gain much honor and be greatly esteemed therefore.

Then, though it were not by way of the spirit, but by the law of prudence and good sense and even the law of the world, the right and sure road to being regarded and esteemed, sought after and loved by men, is to give oneself in earnest to the virtue of humility. Even in profane history it is told of Agessilaus, King of the Lacedemonians and a great pundit amongst them, that, being asked by Socrates what he should do to make all men esteem and think well of him, he answered: "Try to be such as you desire to appear." Another time, in answer to the same question, he replied: "Try always to speak well and to do better." And of another philosopher (Pindar) it is related that he had a great friend, who on every occasion spoke highly in his favor. One day this friend said to him: "You are much in my debt, since wherever I happen to be, I greatly praise and extol your virtues." The philosopher answered: "I pay you well by living in such a manner that you do not lie in any of the things you say of me."

We do not mean hereby to say that we should give ourselves to virtue to be regarded and esteemed by men, which would be great pride and perversity. What we mean is that, if you contrive to be humble in earnest and from your heart, you will be greatly regarded and esteemed, although you do not seek it; rather, the more you fly from honor and esteem and desire to be made small account of, the more it will follow you and cling to you like a shadow. St. Jerome, speaking of St. Paula, says: "Flying from honor and esteem, she was honored and esteemed the more, as the more one flies from his shadow, the more it follows him; and, on the other hand, if you try to catch your shadow, it will fly from you, and the more you run to catch it, the more it will fly, so that you cannot come up with it. Such is honor and esteem."



Christ our Redeemer teaches us this method in the Gospel, where He shows us how to obtain the most honorable places and seats in company. *When thou art invited to a wedding-feast, do not take the place of honor, lest some guest more honorable than thou may have been invited by the master; and then he that hath invited you both, coming in, may say to thee, Give this man place; and then thou shalt begin with shame to take the lowest place; but when thou art invited, go and take the lowest place, that when he that hath invited thee cometh he may say, Friend, go up higher: then thou shalt have glory before them that sit at table* (Luke xiv. 8-11). And this is what the Holy Ghost had said before by the mouth of the Wise Man: *Do not play the great man in the presence of the King, nor seat thyself in the seats of the mighty: it is better that they should say to thee, Come up hither, than that thou shouldst be humbled before the prince* (Prov. xxv. 6-7). And he continues the parable, saying: *Everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke xiv. 11). You see how not only before God, but also before men, the humble man, who chooses the low and abject position, is honored and esteemed; and, on the other hand, the proud who desires and puts in for the first place and the best and most honorable posts, is despised and made of less account. St. Augustine ("Ad Fratres de Eremito") cries out saying: "O holy humility, how unlike thou art to pride! Pride, my brethren, hurled Lucifer from heaven, but humility brought the Son of God to make Himself man. Pride cast Adam out of paradise, but humility lifted up the good thief there. Pride divided and confounded the tongues of the giants; humility gathered together the divided. Pride changed King Nabuchodonosor into a beast, but humility made Joseph lord of Egypt and prince of the people of Israel. Pride drowned Pharaoh, but humility lifted up and exalted Moses."

## CHAPTER XXII

*That Humility Is the Means to Attain True Peace of Soul,  
and We Shall Never Arrive at That without It*

**L**EARN of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls (Matt. xi. 29). One of the principal and most efficacious motives that we can allege to encourage ourselves to despise the honor and esteem of the world and aim at being humble is that which Christ our Redeemer proposes to us in these words; namely, that it is the only way to attain inward peace and quiet of soul, a thing so desirable that St. Paul sets it down for one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost (Gal. v. 22). The fruit of the Spirit is peace. Better to understand the peace and quiet of soul that the humble man enjoys, it will be well to see the restlessness and turmoil which the proud man carries in his heart, since contrary is known by contrary. Holy Scripture is full of pronouncements that the wicked enjoy no peace. *There is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord* (Isaias xlviii. 22). *Peace, peace, and there is no peace* (Jerem. vi. 14). *Wreckage and unhappiness is in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known* (Psalm xiii. 3). They do not know what manner of thing it is to have peace; and though sometimes they have the external appearance of peace, it is not true peace, for there within their heart they have war, the war which their own conscience is ever making on them. *Lo, in the midst of peace my bitterness was most bitter* (Isaias xxxviii. 17). The wicked ever live in bitterness of heart.

But particularly the proud carry about with them great restlessness and turmoil. The special reason of this we may gather well from St. Augustine, who says that of pride there is born at once envy, as a legitimate daughter, and never but in company with this evil daughter is the evil mother. These two evil companions, he says, pride and

envy, make the devil a devil. Thereby it will be understood what work these two evil beings will do in man, seeing that they suffice to make the devil a devil. He who lives on the one hand full of pride and of desires of honor and esteem and sees that things do not turn out according to his plans, and on the other hand lives at the same time full of envy, which is the daughter of pride and her inseparable companion, when he sees others regarded and esteemed and preferred to himself, must clearly be full of gall and bitterness and great turmoil and restlessness, for there is nothing so painful to a proud man, nothing that so much cuts him to the heart, as one of these things.

Holy Scripture paints this to the life in that proud Aman. He was a great favorite with King Assuerus, above all the princes and grandees of the kingdom; he had abundance of riches and temporal goods; he was greatly regarded and made much of by all, so that it looked as though he had nothing more on earth to desire. Yet with all that he was so put out at one single man of low estate, remaining seated at the gates of the palace, taking no notice of him, not doffing his cap nor rising, nor moving from his place when he passed by, that he reckoned nothing of all the fortune that he had in comparison with the pain and trouble that he felt at that annoyance. So he confessed himself, complaining of it to his friends and to his wife, declaring his prosperity and power: *But while I enjoy such great satisfactions, it seems to me that I have nothing, while I see that Jew Mardochai seated at the gates of the palace* (Esther v. 13). Hereby is seen the unrest of pride and the waves and storms that arise in the proud man's heart. *The wicked are as a raging sea, that cannot rest* (Isaias lvii. 20). As the sea in its wild fits, so is the heart of the wicked and the proud. Such was the rage that Aman conceived in his heart on this occasion that he thought it a mere nothing to lay hands on this individual; but, knowing that he was a Jew by birth, he obtained patent letters from King

Assuerus, providing that all the Jews in his kingdom should die. As for Mardochai, he prepared in his garden a very high gallows to hang him thereon. But his dream turned out quite the other way; for the Jews executed upon their enemies the sentence that had been passed on them; and Aman himself was fastened to the gallows that he had made ready to hang Mardochai.

But before that there had befallen him another sore disappointment. It was this. One morning, when he was plotting his vengeance, he had risen early and betaken himself to the palace to get leave from the king for that purpose. Now it happened that the king had not been able to sleep that night, and bade them bring and read to him the history and chronicle that was written of his times. When they came to the service that Mardochai had rendered the king, discovering to him a treasonable plot that some of his courtiers were hatching against him, he asked: "What reward and recompense has been given this man for this so great service and fidelity?" They answered, "None." The king said: "Who is there? Has anyone come to the palace?" They told him: "Aman is here outside." "Let him then come in." Aman came in, and he asked: "What will be the right thing to do to a man whom the king desires to honor?" Aman, thinking that he must be the man whom the king desired to honor, answered: "The man whom the king desires to honor must be clad in the royal robes and mounted on the king's own horse, with the royal crown on his head; and one of the chief knights of the court must go before him, leading the horse by the bridle, and proclaiming through the streets: Thus shall be honored the man whom the king desires to honor." The king said to him: "Go, then, to that Mardochai who is at the gates of the palace and do all that thou hast said, and see that thou failest not on a single point." See the grief that this sad and proud heart must have felt! However, he could do no less, but executed all the command to the letter. One would



think that no greater mortification for him could be imagined; and shortly after it came about that he was hung on the gallows he had prepared for Mardochai. This is the pay that the world is wont to give to its own. And see whence started the pip in the hen, as they say: it was from the other's not taking off his cap or standing up when the great man passed.

A trifle like this is enough to distress and disturb the proud and keep them in perpetual annoyance and bitterness. So we see today in persons of the world, and the more, the higher their rank. These points make so many punctures to prick and pierce their heart; there is no stroke of a lance that they feel so much. And something of this is never wanting to the proud ones of the world, however much they enjoy favor and hold position; thus they ever carry with them a heart of bitterness more bitter than gall, and live in perpetual restlessness and dissatisfaction. And it will be the same here in religion if a man is proud, for he also will make a grievance of their not reckoning so much of him as of other people, and of their selecting So-and-So for such an appointment and leaving him out in the cold; these and the like complaints will cause him as much disturbance as their points of honor and pretensions cause in worldly people, and haply more. How many have had their vocation imperiled by these things! How many people have been led on thereby to leave their order, on the plea that they could not live in it without being insulted and that they were not well thought of nor properly appreciated there! How many have had their salvation jeopardized in this way! Humility is not only necessary for perfection, but oftentimes for salvation. *Unless ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. xviii. 3). Oh, with how much reason used Father Francis Xavier to say: "O opinion, O opinion and esteem of men, what evils hast thou done, art doing, and shalt do!"

Hence will be understood another point of very common experience, that, though it is true that there is such a thing as sickness of melancholy, yet very often a man's being melancholy and sad does not come of any humor of melancholy or bodily ailment, but of a humor of pride and spiritual infirmity. You are sad and melancholy because you are left out in the cold, thrust into a corner, and no account taken of you. You are sad and melancholy because in the situation whence you thought to come off with honor, you came away without it; or, rather, you fancy it issued in your shame and confusion. The thing did not succeed as you had wished; the sermon did not go off, nor the disputation, nor the academical theses, as you thought it should have done; rather, you fancy you lost your credit and reputation over it, and therefore you are sad and melancholy. When you have to make any of these public displays, the fear of how it is to go, and whether you are to gain honor or lose it, makes you sad and distressed. These are the things that make a proud man sad and melancholy. But the humble of heart, who has no desire of honor and reputation and is content with a low place, is free from all these anxieties and distresses and enjoys profound peace, according to those words of Christ which that holy man (À Kempis) took up: "If anywhere there is peace on earth, the humble of heart possesses it." Thus were it for no spiritual motive or desire of perfection, but only in our own interest and the keeping of peace and quiet in our heart, for that sole motive we should make it our endeavor to be humble; for this is to live, and the other course is to die a living death.

St. Augustine relates to this purpose an incident in his own life, wherein he says the Lord gave him to understand the blindness and misery in which he then lived. When I was very busy, he says, over a speech which I had to deliver before the emperor, telling his praises, most of which had to be false, and I was praised for it by those

who knew them to be false—for such is the vanity and folly of the world—I was under a load of care about the business, very pensive and fanciful as to my prospects of success, quite in a fever of consuming thoughts. Well, it happened that, passing through a street of Milan, I saw a poor beggarman, who had had a meal and some drink besides, playing amusing tricks in high glee. When I saw him, I said to my friends who were there: “How pitiable are our follies! In all our labors (as in those in which we were then taken up), dragging uphill the load of our happiness, wounded with the pricks of a thousand greedy cravings, and adding load to load, we were seeking and arriving at nothing but to gain some assured joy, a thing in which yon poor man is getting the start of us already, and we perchance shall never reach it.” What he had attained by means of some small alms given him, I was seeking with so many labors and mischances; I mean, the joy of earthly felicity. Sooth to say, goes on St. Augustine, that poor man was not in possession of true joy; but the joy that I was seeking with my ambitious efforts was more false than his; and after all he was in mirth, and I in sadness; he felt safe, and I was under a thousand fears and turmoils. And if anyone should ask me which I would rather choose, joy or sadness, I would answer him that I would rather choose joy; and if he asked me again whether I would rather be as that man was or as I was myself, then I would rather choose to be as I was myself, full as I was of troubles and mishaps. And I should have no reason for that preference; otherwise, I ask, what reason had I for it? I should not have preferred myself to that poor man on the score of my knowing more than he did, because, allowing that, it afforded me no satisfaction, but all that I desired with my knowledge was to please men; not to teach them, but simply to gratify them. Beyond doubt, he says, that man was happier than I was, not only because he was merry, and I a prey to cares that gnawed my entrails; but also because he

had got his sup of wine by fair means, while I was seeking vainglory by telling lies.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### *Of Another Manner of Means More Effectual for Gaining the Virtue of Humility: By Practising It*

WE have spoken of the first sort of means that are usually given for gaining virtue, namely, reasons and considerations, as well divine as human. But such is the inclination that we have to this vice of pride, by reason of our having so rooted in our heart that desire of divinity shown by our first parents (Gen. iii. 5), that all the considerations in the world suffice not finally to destroy these spirits and fumes of desire to be regarded and esteemed. It seems to happen to us in this matter as to people who have taken a fright. However many reasons you give them to persuade them that there is nothing to be alarmed at, they tell you: "I quite see that all you say is true and I should be very glad to act on it; but for all that I cannot bring myself to shake off the fear." So some say: "I quite see that all these reasonings that you have given about the opinion and esteem of the world are correct and prove convincingly that it is but a puff of wind and vanity, but, after all, I cannot bring myself to disregard it; I should like to do so, but somehow, without my wanting it, these things upset me and carry me away." As, then, to rid a timid person of fear, reasonings and considerations are not enough, but along with them we are wont to give him things to do for remedies, telling him to go up and touch these seeming ghosts and bogeys, and to go at nighttime to dark and lonely places to experience and see that there is nothing there but mere imagination and apprehension of his own, and so he gradually shakes off his fear; in like manner, to succeed in setting at naught the opinion and



esteem of the world, the saints tell us that reasonings and considerations are not enough, but it is necessary for that end to have recourse to deeds and practices of humility, and that this is the chiefest and most efficacious means that we can apply on our part to gain that virtue.

St. Basil says that, as sciences and arts are acquired by practice, so also are moral virtues. To be a good musician, or a good mechanic, or a good rhetorician or philosopher, you must needs practise the art a great deal, and in this way you will come out a proficient in it. So also to gain the habit of humility and of the other moral virtues, you must practise their acts, and in this way you will gain them. And if anyone says that to compose and moderate the passions and affections of the soul and gain the corresponding virtues, all that is wanted is reasons and considerations and instructions and lessons from Scripture and the saints, he deceives himself, says St. Basil. It will be with him as with a man who thinks to learn how to build, or to coin money, and never practises it, but is wholly taken up with hearing lessons and instructions on the art. It is certain that he will never turn out a workman; just as little will he ever turn out a proficient in humility or in the other virtues who does not practise himself in them. St. Basil quotes in confirmation of this that text of St. Paul the Apostle: *Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified* (Rom. ii. 13). It is not enough to hear many reasons and instructions, but it is necessary to put the thing into execution, and in this business practice and exercise is worth more and carries you further than all the theory in the world. And though it is true that every virtue and every good gift must come to us from the hand of God and that our own strength is not sufficient for this purpose, nevertheless this same Lord, Who is to give it us, requires that we help ourselves in this manner.

St. Augustine on those words of Christ: *If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet* (John xiii. 14), says that this is what Christ our Redeemer wished to teach us by this example of washing the feet of His disciples. "This it is, blessed Peter, that thou knewest not when thou wouldst not consent to Christ's washing thy feet. He promised that thou shouldst know it in aftertime. Now is the aftertime, now thou shalt know it." It is that, if we wish to gain the virtue of humility, we must exercise ourselves in acts of humility. *I have given you an example, that ye may do as I have done* (John xiii. 15). Since the Sovereign and Almighty has humbled Himself; since the Son of God has abased Himself and busied Himself in humble and lowly exercises, washing the feet of His disciples, serving His Mother and St. Joseph, and being subject and obedient to them in all that they commanded Him, let us learn of Him and exercise ourselves in lowly and humble exercises, and in this way we shall gain the virtue of humility. This is also what St. Bernard says: "Exterior humiliation is the way and means to gain the virtue of humility, as patience to gain peace, and reading and study to gain knowledge." Accordingly, if you desire to gain the virtue of humility, shun not the practices of humiliation; for if you say that you cannot and have no mind to humble and abase yourself, neither can you gain the virtue of humility.

St. Augustine proves this right well, and gives the reason why this exterior practice of humiliation is so important and necessary an aid to the gaining of true humility of heart. "When the body is bowed down to your brother's feet, then also in the heart itself there is excited—or if it was there already, there is confirmed—the sentiment of humility." The exterior and interior man are so knit and bound together, and the one depends so much on the other, that, when the body is humbled and bowed down, there is awakened there within the heart a sentiment of humility.

There is something in this humbling of myself before my brother to serve him and kiss his feet; there is something in a poor and mean dress and a lowly and humble office: it seems to go to engender and beget humility in the heart; or if it is already there, it goes to preserve and increase it. And so St. Dorotheus answered the question: How can the soul gain humility from a mean and poor dress worn by the body? "Because it is certain," he said, "that the disposition of the body for better or worse reacts upon the soul." Thus we see that the disposition of the soul varies according as the body is well or ill, satisfied with food or hungry. In the same way a man is otherwise disposed when mounted on a well-caparisoned horse or seated on a throne, than he would be when riding an ass or sitting on the ground. So, too, his sentiments and mood differ according as he is richly dressed or shabbily and poorly clad.

St. Basil also notes this well. He says that, as the hearts of men in the world are lifted up, and the fumes of vanity and pride and self-esteem engendered in them, by their being well and stylishly dressed, so in religious and servants of God a poor and humble habit awakens in the heart a sentiment of humility and induces a low opinion of self and seems to make the man despicable. And the saint adds that, as men of the world look for good and fashionable clothes in order to be better known and made more account of and respected, so the servants of God and the truly humble look out for poor and mean garments, to be thereby underrated and thought less of amongst men, and because they think that they have therein a great preservative to keep and increase in themselves true humility. Of all exterior humiliations one of the chief is that of a poor and mean dress, and that is why it is so usual among the truly humble. Of Father Francis Xavier we read in his Life that he always went about very poorly clad to keep himself in humility, and because he feared that in fine clothes there

might be involved and mingled some self-esteem and presumption, as does usually happen.

For another reason it will also be seen what a great help to the gaining of humility of heart or any other interior virtue is the exterior practice of the same. For the will is much more moved thereby than by mere desires, since clearly a present object moves more forcibly than an absent one; thus what we see with our eyes moves us more than what we merely hear. Hence was derived the proverb: "Where eyes see not, heart breaks not." Thus the exterior, which is put into act by reason of the object's being there present, moves the will much more than an interior apprehension and desire, where the object is not present, but has place only in the imagination and apprehension. The virtue of patience will make greater growth in your soul by one great affront borne with good will than by three or four existing in desire only without act; and the virtue of humility will grow more by spending one day in a lowly and humble office or by wearing a worn-out and poor habit than by many days of bare desires. Every day we find by experience that someone has a repugnance to do one or other of the ordinary mortifications that we do, and the second day he does it without feeling any difficulty, whereas before he had many desires of doing the same and they were not enough to overcome the difficulty. For the same reason also the Society practises public penances, as we read that many holy men practised them; for once one of these penances is done, the doer becomes master of himself to do other things that formerly were difficult. Add to this what theologians say, that the interior act, when accompanied by the exterior, is commonly more intense and effectual. Thus in every way it is a great help towards gaining the virtue of humility to exercise ourselves exteriorly in lowly and humble acts.

And by the same reasons and causes whereby a virtue is gained, it is preserved and augmented. As exterior prac-



tice is necessary to gain the virtue of humility, it is also necessary to preserve and augment it. Hence it follows that this exercise is very important for all, not only for beginners, but also for proficients, and very advanced proficients, as we said elsewhere, treating of mortification. And so our Father in his Constitutions and Rules greatly commends it to all. "It will be a very special help to do with all possible devotion those lowly offices in which humility and charity are more exercised." And elsewhere he says: "They ought to forestall temptations by their contraries; thus if one finds himself inclined to pride, he should practise himself in lowly offices which he thinks will help to humble him, and so of other evil inclinations." And again: "As regards lowly and humble offices, they should willingly take up those to which they find greater repugnance, if they be ordered to do them." And so I say that these two things, humility and humiliation, ought to aid one another; and from interior humility, which consists in despising oneself and holding oneself of little account and desiring to be held of little account by others, should spring exterior humiliation, whereby a man shows himself without such as he reckons himself within; I mean to say that, as the humble man contemns himself in his own eyes and holds himself unworthy of any honor, such should be his exterior behavior and the actions that he does. Let him show in his actions the interior humility which he has within, choosing the lowest place, as Christ our Redeemer says. Let him not disdain to deal with little ones and people of low degree; let him rejoice in humble offices; and this same exterior humiliation, which springs from the interior, will swell the very fountain from which it takes its origin.

## CHAPTER XXIV

*What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples*

PETER OF CLUNY relates that there was in the Carthusian Order a religious of holy and approved life, whom our Lord preserved so chaste, pure, and undefiled that he never suffered any illusion even in his dreams. As the hour of his death approached, and all the religious were assisting by his pillow, the prior, who was also there, commanded him to tell them what was the thing in which he thought he had most pleased our Lord in this life. He answered: "Father, it is a hard thing that you bid me, and I would nowise tell it if obedience did not oblige me thereto. From my childhood I have been much afflicted and persecuted by the devil; but according to the multitude of pains and tribulations that my heart has suffered, my soul has been refreshed by many consolations which Christ and the Virgin Mary, His Mother, have sent me. Being thus one day much afflicted and fatigued by great temptations of the devil, the sovereign Virgin appeared to me, and at her presence all the devils fled and all their temptations ceased. After having consoled and encouraged me to persevere and go on in virtue and perfection, she said to me: 'And that thou mayest do that the better, I will tell thee in particular, out of the treasures of my Son, three manners or practices of humility, by exercising which thou wilt greatly please God and vanquish thine enemy. They are that thou shouldst humble thyself always in these three things: in thy diet, in thy dress, and in the duties that thou dost. Thus in eating thou shouldst desire and contrive to get the cheapest foods; in dress, the poorest and coarsest habit; and in duties seek ever the lowliest and most humble, taking it for a great honor and gain to be busied always in the meanest and most abject offices, which others disdain and shun.'

So saying, she disappeared, and left imprinted on my heart the virtue and efficacy of these words, to do henceforth according as she had taught me, and thereby I felt in my soul great improvement."

Cassian relates of the Abbot Pinufius that, being a monk of Egypt and abbot of his monastery, esteemed and honored by his monks as a father and master for his venerable white hair and admirable life, he took it ill to receive such honor and desired to see himself humbled and forgotten. So one night he stole out of his monastery and, putting on a secular dress, he set out for the monastery of Pacomius, which was at a great distance from his own, and famous at that time for rigor and fervor of holiness. His object was that, not being known, they might treat him as a novice and make little of him. So he stood at the gate many days, humbly begging the habit, prostrating himself and kneeling before all the monks. Then they purposely made game of him and insulted him, saying that after having had his fill of enjoying the world, in old age he came to the service of God, where it was plain that he came more out of necessity and to get his livelihood than out of desire of the divine service. At last they received him, giving him charge of the garden of the monastery and assigning another for his superior, whom he was to obey in all things. Doing his office with great exactitude and humility, he contrived to do all that the rest refused, which was the most troublesome work of the house; and not content with what he did in the daytime, he used to get up secretly at night and put in order the things of the house—all he could without being seen—so that in the morning everybody wondered, not knowing who had done it. So he spent three years, very well satisfied with the fine occasion that he had in hand to work and be made little of, which was what he had so much desired. But his monks deeply felt the absence of their father, and some of them went out to seek him in divers places. When they had now lost all hope of

finding him, at the end of three years, one of Pinufius' monks, passing by the monastery of Pacomius, with very little thought of finding him, recognized the saint after all spreading dung on the soil. He threw himself at his feet: the beholders were much astonished thereat; but when they came to know who he was by the fame that reached their ears of him and his doings, they begged his pardon. The holy old man wept over his misfortune in having been discovered by the envy of the devil, and losing the treasure that he had found there. They carried him off then by force and welcomed him with joy in his own monastery, and from that time kept good watch over him very diligently. But in that they were no match for him, so that he failed not to get out another night—such was the great desire that he had of being despised and unknown and his relish and taste for that humble life which he had led in the other monastery. So by prearrangement he took ship for Palestine, which was a long way off, and doing so he came to land near the monastery of Cassian. But our Lord, Who is careful to exalt the humble, ordained it so that he was discovered by other monks of his own, who had come to visit the Holy Places; and hereby it came about that the holy man's reputation went up still higher.

In the lives of the Fathers there is a story of a monk who had lived a long time in the desert in solitude in great penance and prayer. There came to him one day an idea that he ought by this time to be perfect. So he put himself in prayer and made this request to God: "Lord, show me what is wanting in me to perfection." God wishing to teach him humbler thoughts, he heard a voice which told him: "Go to such and such a person"—he was a man who kept swine—"and do what he tells you." At the same time it was made known by revelation to the other that this solitary was coming to speak to him, and that he should tell him to take the whip and keep the swine. The old solitary came and, after saluting him, said: "I greatly desire to



serve God; tell me in charity what I am to do to that end." He asked him: "Will you do what I tell you?" The old man answered Yes; whereupon he said to him: "Take this whip, and go keep the pigs." He obeyed, because he greatly desired to serve God and gain what was wanting in him to perfection. And the good old man went with his whip keeping swine; and those who knew him—and there were many, so great was the fame of his sanctity in that country—seeing him keeping swine, said: "Have you seen that old solitary, about whom we have heard tell of so many things, how he has gone off his head and taken to keeping pigs? Surely his long fasts and great penance must have dried up his brain, and he has gone mad." The old man, who heard these things said, bore them with great patience and humility, and so went on for several days. And God, seeing his humility and with what good will he bore these affronts and words of blame, bade him afresh go back to his place.

In the "Spiritual Meadow" there is a story of a holy bishop who abandoned his bishopric and his honorable estate and came alone to the holy city of Jerusalem, desiring to be made little of, because nobody knew him there. So he set himself down, shabbily dressed, as a day laborer at the public works, supporting himself by his labor. There was there a count named Ephrem, a pious and prudent man, who had the charge of repairing the public buildings of the city. He at several times saw the holy bishop sleeping on the ground, and saw a pillar of fire rising up from him and reaching to heaven. At this he was much astonished, to see a man so poor and begrimed with the dust of the buildings, with his hair and beard grown long, and living in such a mean and contemptible occupation. At last one day he could no longer contain himself, but took the man apart and asked him who he was. The saint replied that he was one of the poor of the town, and spent his life in that labor to have wherewith to keep himself. The count

was not satisfied with this answer, God so desiring to honor His servant by discovering his humility. So the count asked him again and again who he was, with much urgency, till he was forced to discover himself. And so he told him that he would discover himself under two conditions—first, that while he lived nothing of all that he said should be made public; the second, that he was not to ask his name. It was agreed, and he discovered to him that he was a bishop, and that to escape honor and consideration he had taken flight here.

St. John Climacus tells of a leading citizen of Alexandria, who came to be received into a monastery. The abbot, judging by his look and other appearances that he was a rough-tempered man, haughty and puffed up with the vanity of the world, said to him: "If you really are determined to take upon yourself the yoke of Christ, you must let yourself be exercised in the labors of obedience." He answered that, like the iron in the hands of the blacksmith, submissive to anything that he liked to do with it, "so, Father, I submit to whatever you shall command me." "I wish, then," said the abbot, "that you station yourself at the gate of the monastery, and throw yourself at the feet of all who come in and go out, and tell them to pray to God for you, for you are a great sinner." He fulfilled this obedience right well. And after he had been seven years at this exercise and had gained great humility thereby, the abbot wished to receive him into the monastery in company with the others, and ordain him as one who deserved that honor. But he, employing many intercessors, and among them St. John Climacus himself, prevailed upon the superior to leave him in the same place and exercise which he had held hitherto, until he should finish his course; and this he said with the air of one signifying or conjecturing that now his last hour was at hand. And so it was, for some days after this the Lord took him to Himself. And seven days afterwards he took with him the porter of the mon-

astery, to whom he had promised in his lifetime that, if after his death he enjoyed any favor with God, he would arrange for him to be his companion very shortly, and so it was. The same saint says that, when he was alive and was practising this exercise of humility, he asked him what he was busy thinking about at that time, and he answered that his practice was to hold himself unworthy of the company of the monastery and of the society and sight of the fathers, or even to lift up his eyes to look at them.

It is related in the Lives of the Fathers that the Abbot John used to tell a story of a philosopher who had a disciple who committed a fault; whereupon his master said to him: "I will not pardon you unless you bear the harsh language of others for three years." He did so, and then came for his pardon; and the philosopher said to him once more: "I give you no pardon unless for three years more you give money to those who use harsh language to you." He did so, and then the master pardoned him and said to him: "Now you may go to Athens to learn wisdom." He went to Athens, and there he encountered a philosopher whose practice it was to pour out harsh language upon all freshmen who attended his lectures, to see whether they had patience. He used such language to this newcomer, and the latter began to laugh. He said to him: "How is it that you laugh when I use this harsh language to you?" He answered: "For three years I have been making gifts to those who used harsh language to me; and now that I have found a man who will use such language to me for nothing, what would you but that I should laugh?" Thereupon the philosopher said to him: "Come in, for you are a good subject for wisdom." Whence the Abbot John drew the conclusion that patience is the portal of wisdom.

Father Maffeus, in the life that he writes of our blessed Father Ignatius, relates how one day our Father was going on pilgrimage from Venice to Padua along with James Lainez, in garments very old and patched. A shepherd boy

caught sight of them, came near, and began to laugh and make fun of them. Our Father very cheerfully stopped short and, when his companion asked him why he did not go on and leave this youngster behind, he answered: "Why should we deprive this child of this amusement and occasion of mirth that has come in his way?" So he stood at ease, that the youngster might have his fill of staring and laughing and joking—he meanwhile getting more satisfaction out of this scorn than worldly people do out of honors and marks of respect.

Of our Father Francis Borgia it is recounted in his Life that he went once on a journey with Father Bustamante for his companion. They came to an inn, where all the sleeping accommodation consisted of a narrow room with two separate mattresses stuffed with straw. The fathers went to bed, and Father Bustamante, who was old and suffering from asthma, did nothing all night long but cough and spit, and thinking that he was spitting against the wall, it so happened by chance that he was spitting on Father Francis, and many times on his face. The father never spoke a word, nor changed his position, nor got out of the way for that. In the morning, when Father Bustamante saw by daylight what he had done, he was horrified and greatly confused; and Father Francis no less joyful and content; and to console him he said: "Be not distressed at this, father, for I do assure you that there was no place in the room more worthy of being spat upon than my person."

## CHAPTER XXV

### *Of the Exercise of Humility That We Have in Religion*

ONE of the reasons that St. Basil assigns for preferring the life of a monk living in community to that of a hermit is that a solitary life, besides being dangerous, is not so



available as monastic life for the gaining of ordinary virtues, since it presents no opportunity for their exercise. How is he to be exercised in humility who has no one before whom he can humble himself? Or in charity and mercy, since he has no dealings with another? Or, again, in patience, when there is none to resist his will? But a religious living in community is in a position of advantage for the gaining of all necessary virtues, having great occasion to exercise himself in them all: in humility, because he has those to whom he should subject himself and humble himself before them; in charity, because he has those towards whom he must practise it; in patience, because in dealing with so many brethren there is plenty of occasion for that; and so of the other virtues. We religious owe much gratitude to the Lord for the favor He has done us in drawing us to religion, which affords such opportunity and many means for obtaining virtue—which is, in fact, a school of perfection.

We of the Society are particularly obliged in this matter because, besides the common means, we have given us very special means for obtaining humility in our Rules and Constitutions. If we keep our rules well, we shall be very humble, because in them we find very sufficient exercise of humility. Such is the rule, so important in the Society, of opening our entire conscience to our superior, giving him an account of all our temptations, passions, and evil inclinations, and of all our defects and miseries. And though it is true that this rule was laid down for other purposes, nevertheless it is doubtless a great exercise of humility. Such again is the rule which says: "For their greater advancement in spirit and especially for their greater subjection and self-humiliation, all must be content to have all their errors and faults, and whatever may be noted or observed in them, made known to their superiors by anyone whoever has knowledge of them out of confession." Notice the reason given—"for their greater subjection and self-

humiliation;" that is just what we are saying. If you desire to gain true humility, you must rejoice in all your faults' being made known to your superiors. Thus a good and humble religious goes of himself to tell his faults to his superior and ask a penance for them, and takes care to be himself the first person from whom the superior shall know his faults.

And there is not only this, but a much greater exercise of humility in the Society, in that you tell your faults publicly before all, that they may disparage you and set small store by you, since that is the end of this exercise of humility—not that they may take you for a humble and mortified man, for that would be no act of humility, but of pride. In the same spirit you have to take and desire reprehensions, not only in private and secret, but publicly before all; and so far as in you lies you should rejoice that this be done in right-down good earnest, and that all should think accordingly and take you for what you are as described. And generally the use and practice of all the exterior penances and mortifications that are practised in the Society aids much to the gaining and keeping of true humility, such as kissing feet, eating under the table or on your knees, prostrating at the door of the refectory, and the like. If these things are done in the spirit in which they ought to be done, they will be very profitable for advancement in true humility and for the preservation of the same. When you take your dinner sitting on the ground, you should do this with an inward recognition of yourself as one who deserves not to sit at table with your brethren. When you kiss feet, own that you do not deserve to kiss the ground on which they walk. When you prostrate, own that you deserve that all should tread on you. And you should wish and desire that all should think so.

It should be a very good thing when one does these acts of mortification to set one's mind interiorly on these considerations, as did that holy monk, mentioned in the for-

mer chapter, who stood seven years at the gate of the monastery; for in this way they will be very profitable to us and engender humility in our heart. But if you do these things in a spiritless way and outwardly only, there will be little profit in them, because, as St. Paul says: *Bodily performance profiteth little* (I Tim. iv. 8), that is to say, doing things for mere form and custom's sake, without any effort to gain the end intended thereby. If after kissing your brothers' feet and prostrating for all to tread on you, you give vent to harsh and rude words, the two performances do not agree one with the other; that is a sign that the first was pure ceremony and hypocrisy.

These and many other exercises of humility we have in our Society by rule and constitution. I have chosen to bring them to memory here, though we drew attention to them before for another purpose, that we may consider them, and therein may be our principal practice of humility; because the matter wherein a religious should chiefly practise and display virtue and mortification is that which is obligatory by the rules and constitutions of his order, since therein consists our advancement and perfection. If you have not virtue enough to put into execution the acts of virtue and mortification to which your rule and institute obliges you, you should reckon nothing of any virtue that you have. We can say the like of any Christian, that the chief thing for which he needs humility and mortification is for keeping the law of God; if he has not enough for that, little or nothing will anything else profit him. If he has not humility and mortification enough to confess a thing of which he is ashamed, but for shame, or rather I should say for pride, leaves it out, and so breaks so important a commandment, what will profit him all that he has and does, seeing that this omission alone is enough for his damnation? So we may say with due proportion of the religious. If you have not humility enough to open your conscience to your superior and fulfil such an important rule as that,

what will humility and mortification serve you? If you cannot suffer another to acquaint the superior of your fault that he may correct you, where is your humility? If you have not humility enough to receive rebuke and penance, to do a lowly and humble duty, to be incorporated in the grade in which the Society shall choose to put you, where is the good of your humility and indifference, and for what other end do superiors ask those virtues of you? In this way the religious may specify the particular points of his rule, and every man the particular requirements of his state and office.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### *That We Must Be on Our Guard against Uttering Words That May Redound to Our Praise*

THE saints and masters of spiritual life, Basil, Gregory, Bernard, and others, advise us carefully to beware of uttering words that may redound to our own praise and credit, according to holy Toby's advice to his son: *Never allow pride to reign in thy thoughts, or in thy speech* (Tob. iv. 14). The Apostle had said sundry great things of himself, because so it was expedient for his hearers and for the greater glory of God; and he might have said things still greater, since he had been rapt to the third heaven, where he saw and understood more than tongue can utter, but he refrained from saying them, as he says, *lest anyone should think of me more than there is and is seen in me* (II Cor. xii. 6). "Oh, how well said," cries St. Bernard, "is that *I refrain now from that*. The proud and arrogant man refrains from none of these things; he lets pass no occasion for showing off any good point that he has about him, but rather sometimes he piles on additions and says more than is true, to be more regarded and valued the more. It is only the truly humble man who lets slip these



occasions and, that they may not take him for more than he is, tries to cover up what he really is." And going down to particulars he says: "Never say anything whence you may appear more learned, or more religious, or a man of prayer"—and, generally, anything that may redound to your praise in any manner whatsoever. Always beware of saying that, since it is a very dangerous thing, although you might say it with much truth and even with edification, and you fancy you say it for the good and profit of another; since it concerns you, that is enough for your not saying it. You should always be very cautious on this point, not to lose thereby the good that you may possibly have done.

St. Bonaventure says: "Never utter words that may give the impression that you have knowledge, ability, or genius beyond the ordinary; nor again say anything whence others may conclude that you were somebody of consequence there in the world." It looks very bad in a religious to vaunt himself of the nobility or rank of his people, since all these details of lineage and rank are a mere puff of wind. Someone has well said: "What is nobility good for? To despise it," as we despise riches. All that counts here in religion is virtue and humility. That it is that is valued; whatever you were or were not in the world, it is all smoke. Whoever in religion plumes himself on these things or makes account of them, shows well his vanity and want of spiritual sense; such a one has not left nor spurned the world. St. Basil says: "He who has been born with a new birth, and has contracted a spiritual and divine relationship with God and received power to be His son, is ashamed of his other carnal parentage and forgets it."

In any man whatsoever, words of self-praise sound bad; and so the proverb says: "Praise is a cheap article in your own mouth." And the Wise Man says it better: *Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips* (Prov. xxvii. 2). But in the mouth of a reli-

gious such words sound still worse, as being contrary to his profession; and so from what he expected to enhance his reputation, there ensues a loss of reputation and credit. St. Ambrose on those words of the prophet, *Behold my lowliness and rescue me* (Psalm cxviii. 153), says: "Though a person be sickly, poor, and of low condition, if he is not proud and makes no attempt to set himself above anyone, he gets to be loved and prized for his humility; that stands in stead of everything." And, contrariwise, though a man be very rich, noble, and powerful, and though he be a great scholar and of high parts and abilities, yet if he boasts and uplifts himself therein, he thereby lessens and lowers himself and comes to be despised and discredited because he comes to be accounted proud.

History tells of the Abbot Arsenius that, though in the world he had been so illustrious and eminent in letters—he had been tutor to Arcadius and Honorius, sons of the Emperor Theodosius, who were themselves afterwards emperors—nevertheless, from the time he became a monk, no one ever heard a word from him redolent of such grandeur or conveying the impression that he was a man of letters; rather he conversed and dealt with the other monks with as much humility and plainness as though he had no acquaintance with letters; and he questioned the simplest monks on matters of spirituality, saying that in that highest of sciences he was not worthy to be their disciple. And of the blessed St. Jerome it is said in his Life that, though he was of very noble birth, there is not a word in his writings to give any hint of the same.

St. Bonaventure gives another excellent reason. Know, he says, that there can be hardly anything in you good and worthy of praise, but that it will shine through to others, and they will understand and know it. If you are silent and hide it, you will be well liked and more worthy of praise, as well for your good quality as for your trying to hide it; but if you display it and make a brave show of it,

they will make game of you; and where they were ready to take edification from you and value you, they will come to disparage and make light of you. Virtue in this is like musk; the more you hide it, the more will it show itself by the perfume that it gives out; whereas if you carry it about uncovered, it will presently lose its scent.

St. Gregory relates how a holy abbot named Eleutherius went once on a journey, and coming to a monastery of nuns was hospitably received in a certain house where dwelt a youth much tormented by the devil, who was his companion that night. Morning came, and the nuns asked if anything had happened to the youth that night. He answered, No. Then they told him that he was grievously tormented by the devil every night and begged him earnestly to take him with him to his monastery. The old man granted their request; and when he had been with him in the community for some time without the old enemy's daring to approach, the old man was touched with some inordinate joy and vain satisfaction over the youth's recovery; and in conversation with his monks he said: "The devil was playing the fool, brethren, with those nuns, tormenting the youth; but now that he has come to a monastery of the servants of God, he has not dared to come near him." As he said these words, of a sudden before them all the youth was tormented by the devil. At seeing it, the old man began to weep bitterly, seeing that his vainglory had been the cause of this mishap; and by way of consoling the monks he told them that none of them should have a mouthful to eat until they had obtained the recovery of that youth. They all prostrated in prayer and did not rise from it until the sick man was cured. Hence will be seen how God abhors any words that contain any savor of self-praise, though spoken only in jest, by way of a pleasant joke, as it seems that this saint said them.

## CHAPTER XXVII

*How We Should Exercise Ourselves at Meditation in the Second Degree of Humility*

OUR Father in his Constitutions lays down the rule that, "as worldly men love and desire with all earnestness honors, fame, and the reputation of a great name on earth, so they who are advancing in spirit and following Christ our Lord in good earnest, love and intensely desire just the opposite, desiring to suffer injuries, false witnesses, insults, and to be held and accounted fools, without, however, themselves giving any occasion therefore, because they wish in some measure to imitate Christ our Lord." And he commands that all who are about to enter the Society should first be asked if they have such desires. It certainly seems a stiff thing for a novice who has just left the world and comes "raw bleeding," as they say, to be examined by a rule so strait and of such perfection as this. There is seen the great perfection which our institute requires; it looks for men truly detached from self and entirely dead to the world. But because this is difficult and requires high perfection, our Father goes on to say that if anyone, through our human weakness and misery, does not feel in himself such inflamed desires, he should be asked if he has at least a desire of having them; and thereupon and in this disposition to bear in patience the like occasions when they offer, he will do; for this is a good disposition for learning and making progress. It is enough for a learner to start with a desire to know his trade and to apply himself to it; in that way he will get on with it. Religion is a school of perfection; come in with this desire, and by the grace of the Lord you will go out with what you desire.

Herewith, then, let us commence this exercise and proceed, taking it little by little. You say that you feel in you no desires to be undervalued and made small account



of. Begin there to exercise yourself in meditation on this virtue of humility; say with the prophet: *My soul hath desired to desire thy righteous ways at all times* (Psalm cxiii. 20). O Lord, how far I see myself removed from having those lively and inflamed desires which those great saints and truly humble men had of being undervalued by the world! I should much wish to attain at least to having a desire of having those desires; I desire to desire that. You are going on well so far; that is a good beginning and disposition for gaining your end. Insist and persevere therein in your meditation; beg of the Lord that your heart may be softened, and occupy yourself therein for several days, since these desires are very pleasing to the Lord and He listens to them with very good will, as the prophet says: *The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor, and the readiness of their heart, O Lord, thou hast listened to* (Psalm ix. 38). Soon God will give you a desire to suffer something for His love and to do some penance for your sins; and when He gives it to you, in what can you better fulfil this desire of suffering, and in what can you do greater penance, than in being undervalued and made small account of in retribution for your sins? As David said, when Semei cursed and insulted him: *Let him alone, perchance the Lord will be pleased to accept these insults and reproaches in atonement for my sins, and that will be a great gain to me* (II Kings xvi. 10).

When the Lord has done you this favor that you desire to be undervalued and rated for little in order to be like Christ and imitate Him, you must not fancy that the business is all done and that you have gained the virtue of humility; rather you are then to reckon that you have to begin afresh to plant and consolidate the virtue in your soul. You must take care not to pass lightly over these desires, but stay on them a long time in your meditation until they become efficacious enough to pass into deeds. And when you have got so far that you think you bear

well the occasions of humiliation that come in your way, observe that in the same outward act there are many degrees and steps to mount to arrive at the perfection of humility. First you must practise yourself in bearing with patience all the occasions that offer, tending to your loss of honor and reputation; therein you will find occupation for some time, quite possibly for a long time. Then you must go further, and not stop or rest until you come to rejoice under contempt and insult, and feel therein as much satisfaction as worldly people do in all the honors, riches, and pleasures there are in the world, according to that saying of the prophet: *I have delighted in the way of thy commandments as in all riches* (Psalm cxviii. 14). When we desire a thing in good earnest, we naturally rejoice at getting it: if our desire is great, we greatly rejoice; if little, little. Take this, then, for a sign to see if you desire to be made small account of and if you are growing in the virtue of humility. And the same in other virtues.

That we may profit more by this means of meditation and thereby imprint virtue more deeply on our heart, we should descend to particular cases and difficulties that may occur, animating ourselves and bringing ourselves to the point as though they were actually present, insisting and coming to a determination thereupon, until there is no obstacle in the way, but the road is clear. In this manner vice is gradually uprooted, and virtue sinks into the innermost recesses of the heart, and perfection grows. We find a good comparison to this effect in what goldsmiths do to refine gold. They melt it in the crucible, and when it is melted they throw in a grain of corrosive sublimate, and the gold begins to boil and bubble with great fury till it has consumed all the sublimate, and when it has consumed it, the gold is at rest. Then the goldsmith throws in another grain of sublimate, and the gold once more bubbles and boils, but not with such fury as the first time; and when the sublimate is consumed, the gold is still. A third time he throws in a

grain of sublimate, and again the gold begins to bubble, but quietly. When for the fourth time he throws in a little sublimate, the gold makes no noise over the sublimate, but behaves as though they had thrown in nothing, because it is now refined and purified, and that is a sign thereof. Now this is what we have to do at meditation. Throw in a grain of sublimate, imagining some case of mortification and humiliation to present itself to you; and if you take fright and are troubled, stay thereon until by the heat of prayer this grain of sublimate is consumed, and you pluck up courage to meet that occasion, and remain quiet and tranquil in face of it. Again another day throw in another grain of sublimate, imagining another awkward occurrence involving much mortification and humiliation; and if still there is a bubbling and boiling and nature is troubled, rest thereupon until you exhaust the difficulty and feel at ease about it. Another and another time throw in another grain; and when the sublimate makes in you no noise nor trouble, but whatever turns up and comes before your consideration, you can regard it with much peace and tranquillity, then the gold is refined and purified; that is a sign of your having gained the perfection of the virtue.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### *How We Are to Make the Particular Examen on the Virtue of Humility*

THE particular examen, as we have said in its place, should always be made on one thing alone because in that way it is a more efficacious means and of greater effect than if we made it on many things together, and therefore it is called particular because it is made on one thing alone. This is of so much importance that even with one vice or one virtue oftentimes, and indeed most ordinarily, it is necessary to take it by parts, and little by little, to

gain what is desired. So also with this virtue: if you desire to apply your particular examen to the rooting out of pride from your heart and the gaining of the virtue of humility, you must not take it in general, since pride and humility include a great deal; and if you take it thus in the lump and in general—not to be proud in anything, but humble in all—that is a wide-embracing examen and includes more than if you took it on two or three things together, and so you will get no forwarder; you ought to have taken it little by little, by parts. See where it is that you most of all feel a want of humility and the hold that pride has on you, and begin there; and when you have done with one detail, take to heart another and then another, and in this way little by little you will go on rooting out from you the vice of pride and gaining the virtue of humility. These things, therefore, we will now proceed to divide and dismember, that so we may be able to make better and more profitably our particular examen on the virtue of humility.

Be it the first thing not to utter words that may turn to our own praise and commendation. As this desire of honor and esteem is so natural to us and so rooted in our heart, it comes on to our tongue, almost without our thinking or noticing it, to say words that may redound to our praise either directly or indirectly: *for from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh* (Luke vi. 45). When any creditable action comes up in conversation, we at once seek to have had our part in it. “I happened to be there; indeed, it was through me that the thing turned out as it did; if it had not been for me, and so forth.” I’ll warrant that if the thing had gone otherwise, though you had been there and had your part in it, you would have found not a word to say. Of this sort are many words that often escape us without our seeing their bearing until we have said them. Thus it will be a very good thing to make our particular examen on this matter, that, by having an eye to this danger and forming a good habit, we may get rid of the evil and almost continual habit that we have of acting otherwise.



The second thing is what St. Basil advises us, and also Saints Jerome, Augustine, and Bernard, not to listen willingly to another praising and speaking well of us, for in this also there is great danger. St. Ambrose says that, when the devil cannot upset us by pusillanimity and discouragement, he aims at our overthrow by presumption and pride; and when he cannot compass our ruin by insults showered upon us, he tries to get people to honor and praise us, to effect our overthrow in that way. Of the blessed St. Pacomius it is related in his Life that he used to go out of the monastery to go to more solitary places to pray; and when he returned, often there came devils, and like the coming of a great army with its commander and a great escort, they went before him making a great din; and as it were to make room and remove obstacles they cried: "Stand aside, stand aside; make room, make room; let the saint come, let the servant of God come," to see if they could thereby move him to elation and pride; and he laughed and made game of them. Do you the like when you hear yourself praised; and when thoughts of your high reputation occur to you, make account that you hear the devil saying these things and laugh and make game of him, and so you will deliver yourself from this temptation. St. John Climacus relates a very notable thing. He says that once the devil discovered to a monk the bad thoughts wherewith he assailed another to the end that, when the person so assailed heard from the other's mouth what was passing in his heart, he might take him for a prophet and praise him for a saint, and so the man might become proud. Hence we see how much store the devil sets by pride and vain complacency arising in us, since he tries to set it up by so many arts and stratagems. And so says St. Jerome: "Beware of the Sirens of the sea, that enchant men and rob them of their judgment." So sweet and pleasant in our ears is the music of human praise that no Sirens are such enchanters or so potent to make a man lose his head. Therefore it is

necessary for us to make ourselves deaf and stop our ears. St. John Climacus says that, when people praise us, we should set before our eyes our sins and find ourselves unworthy of the praises given us, and thus we shall draw from them more humility and confusion. Let this, then, be the second thing on which we may make particular examen, not to rejoice when another praises you and speaks well of you. And with this there may be conjoined the practice of rejoicing when they praise and speak well of another, which is another detail of much importance; and when you find any sentiment or movement of envy at their praising and speaking well of another, or any complacency or vain satisfaction when they speak well of yourself, to mark it as a fault.

The third thing that we may make particular examen on is not to do anything to be seen or esteemed by men, according to the warning of Christ our Redeemer in the Gospel. *See to it that ye do not your good works before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye shall have no reward from your Father who is in heaven* (Matt. vi. 1). This is a very profitable examen, and may be divided into many parts. First it may be made on not doing things on mere human motives, and afterwards on doing them purely for God, and after that on doing them right down well, as one working in presence of God and serving God and not men, until we come to do our actions in such manner as to seem in them to be rather loving than working, as we said at length in the treatise of the rectitude and purity of intention that we ought to have in our actions.

The fourth thing on which we can make particular examen is never to excuse ourselves; for that also comes of pride, whereby in committing a fault or having a fault told us, we at once seek an excuse and unconsciously throw one excuse on the top of another; and are ready even to find an excuse for having excused ourselves, *to excuse excuses in sins* (*ad excusandas excusationes in peccatis*, Psalm cxi.

4). St. Gregory on those words of Job: *If in human fashion I have hidden my sin, and concealed in the fold of my vest my evil doing* (Job xxxi. 33), makes good reflection on this phrase, *in human fashion*. He says it is just like man to seek to gloss over and excuse his sin, that bad habit being in our blood and an inheritance from our first parents. The first man, on sinning, at once went to hide himself among the trees of Paradise; and when God reproved him for his disobedience, he thereupon threw the blame on his wife: *The woman that thou gavest me for companion made me eat* (Gen. iii. 12). The woman, to excuse herself, threw the blame on the serpent: *The serpent deceived me and I ate*. God asked them about their sin, that knowing it and confessing it they might obtain His pardon. So, says St. Gregory, He did not ask the serpent, for that creature He was not to pardon. But they, instead of humbling themselves and acknowledging their sin in order to obtain pardon, increased it and made it greater by excusing it and even trying in some way to throw the blame on God. "Lord, the woman Thou gavest me was the cause of this;" as if he would say: "If Thou hadst not given me her for a companion, I should have done nothing of the sort." "The serpent that Thou didst create and let enter into Paradise was what deceived me. If Thou hadst not let it come in here, I should not have sinned." St. Gregory says that, after they had heard from the mouth of the serpent that they should be like unto God, now that they could not be like Him in Godhead, they sought to make Him like themselves in fault, and so the fault that they had committed they made greater by defending it. We, then, as children of such parents, in fact as men, lie under this infirmity, this vice and evil habit, that, when we are reproved for any fault, we at once seek to cloak it over with excuses, as under so many leaves and branches. And sometimes, not content with excusing ourselves, we seek to throw the blame on others.

A saint (Peter Damian) compares those who excuse themselves to a hedgehog, that, when it feels that people want to catch or touch it, with the greatest nimbleness tucks in its head and feet and makes itself into a ball surrounded on all sides with pricks, so that you cannot seize or touch it without first pricking yourself—*ut prius videas sanguinem tuum quam corpus suum*. In this way, says the saint, those are who excuse themselves. If you seek to touch them and tell them the fault they have committed, they at once defend themselves like the hedgehog. And sometimes they will prick you, giving you to understand that you also have need of correction: sometimes telling you that there is a rule that one should not reprove another; at other times saying that others have committed greater faults, and no notice taken. Come to touch the hedgehog, and you will see if it pricks. All this springs from our excessive pride, in that we are unwilling to have our faults known or to be taken for men who have their defects, and we are more sorry for our faults' being known and the loss of credit that we incur thereby than for having committed them, and thus we try to cloak them over and excuse them as far as we can.

And there are persons so unmortified on this point that, even before anything is said to them, they take the first step and excuse themselves, and seek to give a reason for what may be objected against them: if they did this, it was for that reason; and if they did the other, it was for that other reason. Who is pricking you now, that you rear up thus? It is the goad and spur of pride that you have within the very marrow of your constitution, that pricks you and makes you rear up at this even before the time. If, then, you feel in yourself this vice and evil habit, it will be well to make the particular examen thereon until you cease to have any desire to cloak over your fault, but rather rejoice, now that you have committed it, that they take you for a person who has his faults, in reparation and satisfaction



for it. And even though you have not committed the fault, and are reprov'd for it, do not excuse yourself; because when the superior wants to know the motive and cause that you had for doing that, he will know how to inquire; and haply he knows already, but wants to test your humility, and see how you take rebuke and admonition.

Fifthly, it is also a good examen to cut short and retrench thoughts of pride. A man is so proud and so vain that there occur to him many vain and proud thoughts, imagining himself in high posts and ministries to correspond; and there you find yourself preaching in your native place very taking sermons, and sermons, so you imagine, productive of much good; there you are again lecturing, or maintaining theses with great applause of the audience, and the like things. All this comes of the great pride that is seated in us, sprouting out and bursting forth in these thoughts. Thus it makes an excellent particular examen to abridge and cut short at once these vain and ambitious thoughts, as you would stop and cut short at once impure thoughts and rash judgments, and thoughts of any other vice whereby one is molested.

Sixthly, it will be also a good examen to hold all others for our superiors, as the rule tells us. Let us incite ourselves to humility by contriving and desiring to give preference to others, reckoning them all in our mind as if they were our superiors and externally showing all respect and reverence that the condition of each admits of, with religious plainness and simplicity, which advice is taken from the Apostle (Phil. ii. 3; Rom. xii. 10). Although externally deference must be paid according to variety of status and persons, yet in point of true humility and the interior attitude of our soul, our Father wishes that, as he applies the word "least" to this Society and religious order, so each member of it should take himself for the least of all and hold all the rest for his superiors and betters. This, then, will be a very good and profitable examen, provided that it

be not a mere speculative view, but in practice and behavior you conduct yourself to all with the same humility and respect as if they were your superiors. If you took such and such a person for your superior, you would not take liberties in talking to him, nor be rough with him, much less use words that might grieve or mortify him, nor would you be so ready to pass judgment on him, nor resent his dealing or speaking with you in this way or that. So all these things you must note and mark down as faults, when you make examen on this point.

The seventh thing on which we may make particular examen in this matter is to take well all occasions of humility that come in our way. You are apt to resent it when another speaks to you a scornful word, and when they give you orders in peremptory and imperious tones, or when it looks as though they did not make so much account of you as of others. Make your examen on taking well these and the like occasions that offer, occasions that may go to putting you down. This examen is one of the most proper and profitable that we can make to gain the virtue of humility; for besides our thereby going in readiness to meet all that may come in our way and must be met day by day, we may also in this examen grow and mount up by those three degrees of virtue that we have already stated. First you may make your examen on bearing all these things with patience; afterwards on bearing them with readiness and ease, until you come not to dwell on the thing or make any account of it; after that you may make it on bearing them with joy, and delighting in your own humiliation, in which we have said the perfection of humility consists.

The eighth thing on which one may make one's particular examen in this and other matters is to do so many acts and practices of humility (or other virtue on which the examen is made), as well interior as exterior, bringing oneself to act therein so many times in the morning and so many times in the afternoon, beginning with fewer acts and

gradually increasing them until one is quite habituated and accustomed to this virtue. In this way, by dividing one's enemies and taking each by itself, self-conquest is better effected and the end desired gained in a shorter time.

## CHAPTER XXIX

*How Humility Is Compatible with Seeking to Be  
Regarded and Esteemed by Men*

THERE is a doubt that often strikes one about humility, the solution of which is of importance for us to know how to behave in regard of it. We usually say, and it is the common doctrine of the saints, that we should desire to be depreciated, run down, little valued, and made small account of. A difficulty at once arises on the other side: How can we work with profit to our neighbors if they despise us and hold us of small account? Surely for that end it is necessary to have authority with them, and that they should have a good opinion and esteem of us; hence it appears that it is no bad thing, but a good thing, to desire to be respected and regarded amongst men. This doubt is dealt with by the glorious Saints Basil, Gregory, and Bernard. And they answer it very well, saying that, though it is true that we should shun the honor and esteem of the world for the great danger there is in it, and on our part and in so far as it rests with us we should even desire to be despised and held of little account, yet for a certain good purpose of the greater service of God, it may be a lawful and holy thing to desire the honor and esteem of men. So says St. Bernard that, while it is true that on our part we should wish that others should know and feel about us what we know and feel about ourselves, and view us in the same light in which we view ourselves, yet often (he says) it is not advisable that they should know so much, and so it may be sometimes a lawful and holy thing in us to endeavor

that they may not know our faults, not to take any scandal thereby and be hindered in their spiritual advancement. But we need to understand this properly and proceed in the matter with circumspection and much spiritual wisdom, because these and the like truths, under color of truth, are apt to do great harm to some souls from their not knowing how to make use of them.

The same saints explain this doctrine well to us, that we may not take thence occasion to go wrong. St. Gregory says: Sometimes holy men are glad to enjoy the good opinion and esteem of men; that is, when they see it to be a necessary means for the advancement and spiritual help of their neighbors' souls. And this, says St. Gregory, is not rejoicing in one's own position and distinction, by in the fruit and profit of one's neighbor, which is a very different thing. It is one thing to love honor and human esteem for its own sake—dwelling thereupon for one's own satisfaction and with regard to oneself, at being great and distinguished in the opinion of men, and that is bad—and another thing to seek it as a means of producing fruit in souls, and that is not bad, but good. And in this way we may well desire the honor and esteem of the world and men's good opinion of us for the greater glory of God and for its being necessary for the edification of our neighbors and doing them good, for this is not seeking one's own honor and reputation, but the profit and good of one's neighbor and the greater glory of God. As in one who for health's sake takes a purgative draught, which he naturally dislikes, the seeking and taking of the draught is part of his love of health; so it is with human honor, which a good man shuns and disdains—he seeks and accepts it solely for its being in some particular case necessary or profitable for the service of God and the good of souls, in which case he may be said with truth not to wish or desire anything but the glory of God.



But let us see how it may be known whether a man takes delight in honor and the good opinion of men purely for the glory of God and the profit of his neighbor, or whether his delight turns on himself and his own honor and credit; for this is a very delicate question, and the whole point and difficulty of this business consists in this. To this St. Gregory replies: Our joy in honor and credit should be so purely for God that, were it not necessary for His greater glory and the good of our neighbor, we would not only not rejoice at it, but positively be pained. Thus our heart and desire, so far as in us lies, must ever incline to ignominy and contempt, and so, when we have an opportunity of that, we should ever embrace it heartily and rejoice therein, as people do when they get what they want. And as for honor and credit, we should desire and rejoice in it solely in so far as it is necessary for the edification of our neighbor, for the good of his soul, and the honor and glory of God.

Of our blessed Father Ignatius we read that he used to say that, if he let himself be carried away by the fervor of his desire, he would go through the streets naked and feathered and covered with mud, to be taken for a madman; but charity and the desire he had to be useful to his neighbor checked in him this great affection for humility and made him conduct himself with that authority and decorum that became his office and person. But his inclination and desire was to be despised and run down; and whenever an opportunity of humiliation occurred, he embraced it and even sought it in good earnest. By this, then, it will be known whether you rejoice in authority and good name for the good of souls and the glory of God or for your own sake and your own personal honor and authority. If, when an opportunity offers of humiliation and discredit, you embrace it in good earnest and heartily and are glad of it, then it is a good sign that, when the sermon or the business goes well and you are regarded and made much of on that account, you do not rejoice for your own honor

and reputation, but purely for the glory of God and the good of your neighbor ensuing therefrom. But if, when an opportunity of humiliation offers, you refuse it and do not take it well; and when it is not necessary for the profit of your neighbor, you none the less rejoice in the esteem and praises of men and go out of your way to get them, that is a sign that even on those other occasions your joy is for what touches yourself and your own honor and credit, and not purely for the glory of God and the spiritual profit of your neighbor.

Thus it is true that honor and the good opinion of men is not bad, but good, if we make a good use of it, and thus the desire of it may be lawful and holy, as when Father Francis Xavier went with a great retinue in state to visit the King of Bungo. Self-praise also may be good and holy, if it is done as it ought to be, as we see that St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians (II Cor. iv. 2), began to praise and recount grand things of himself, telling the great favors that the Lord had done him, and saying that he had worked harder than the other apostles, and beginning to relate the revelations that he had had, and raptures even to the third heaven. But this he did because it was then proper and necessary for the honor of God and the profit of his neighbors to whom he was writing, that so they might regard and venerate him for an apostle of Christ and receive his doctrine, and profit thereby. And he said these things with a heart that not only despised honor, but loved disparagement and dishonor for Jesus Christ's sake. For when it was not necessary for the good of his neighbor, he knew well how to disparage and abase himself, saying of himself that he was not worthy to be an apostle because he had persecuted the Church of God (I Cor. xv. 9), and calling himself a blasphemer and one born out of due time and the greatest of sinners (I Tim. i. 13-16); and when they offered him slights and insults, he was very well pleased and glad. Hearts such as this we may well trust to receive honor, and

sometimes say things that go to secure it, for they will never do these things without its being necessary for the greater glory of God; and then they do them without being contaminated thereby, as though they did them not, because they love not their own honor, but the honor of God and the good of souls.

But because it is very difficult to receive honor and not grow proud thereupon, or take therein any vain satisfaction or complacency, for this reason saints, fearing the great danger there is in honor and reputation, and dignities and high posts, shun all that sort of thing as far as they can; and used to go where they were not known or esteemed, and contrived to busy themselves in lowly and despicable occupations, because they saw that helped more to their spiritual profit and their preservation in humility, and that it was the safer way for them.

St. Francis used to allege a good reason. I am not a religious, he says, unless I take disgrace with the same cheerfulness of countenance and calm of soul as I take honor. If for the spiritual good of others I rejoice at the honor which they pay me when I preach or do other good works, wherein I put my soul into risk and danger of vanity, much more should I rejoice at my own spiritual good and the making safe of my own soul, of which I am more secure when they find fault with me. It is clear that we are more bound to rejoice in our own spiritual good and profit than in the good and profit of our neighbor, because well-ordered charity begins at home. If, then, you are glad of your neighbor's profit when the sermon or the business went well and brings you in praise and reputation, why are you not glad of your profit when, while you are doing all on your part, you are little thought of in consequence? For that is the better and safer situation for you. If you are glad when you have great talents to do great things for the good of others, why are you not glad of your own profit and increase in humility when God has given you no talent

for these things? If you rejoice in the enjoyment of robust and sound health to labor for others, why do you not rejoice when it is God's will that you should be sick and feeble, and good for nothing but to be thrust into a corner as a piece of useless furniture?—for that is what is to your advantage, and that will help you to be humble, and by that you will please God more than if you were a great preacher, because He wills it so.

Hence it will be seen how much they are mistaken who fix their eyes on worldly honor and reputation, under pretense that this is necessary for doing good to one's neighbor, and under that pretense desire honorable offices and high posts and all that carries authority and influence, and shun what is lowly and humble, thinking to lose authority thereby. There is a great mistake here, since a man loses authority and influence when he thinks to gain it; and when he thinks that he shall lose it, he will gain it. Some think that by a poor habit and an office or occupation that is lowly and humble they shall lose the good opinion that is necessary for dealing profitably with their neighbor. Herein their pride deceives them; rather hereby you will gain it, and by the contrary way, which you follow, you will lose it.

Our blessed Father Ignatius taught this very well. He said that a sense of true humility did more for the conversion of souls than a display of authority which had about it some savor and scent of the world. And so he not only practised this humility himself, but in sending others to labor in the vineyard of the Lord he taught them that, to succeed in great and arduous undertakings, it should always be their policy to take the road of humility and contempt of themselves, for their work would be quite safe if it were well grounded on this humility, and that is the way by which the Lord usually works great things. According to this policy, when he sent Fathers Francis Xavier and Simon Rodriguez to Portugal, he ordered them that on



arriving in that kingdom they should beg alms, and by poverty and self-abasement should open the gate to all the rest. And Fathers Salmeron and Paschasius, when they were sent to Ireland as apostolic nuncios, he also ordered to teach Christian doctrine to children and simple folk. And when the same Father Salmeron and Father Master Lainez attended, for the first time, the Council of Trent, being sent by Pope Paul III as theologians of His Holiness, the instructions that he gave them were, before giving their opinion in the council, to betake themselves to the hospital and serve the poor patients there, and teach the children the elements of our faith; and after having cast these roots, they were then to pass on and speak out their opinion in the council, for so there would be profit and fruit of souls, as we know that by the Lord's goodness there was. And shall we go looking about us, fearing, and measuring the issue by the dictates of human prudence, whether there is a loss of authority by doing these things? Never you fear that the pulpit will lose credit by your going to teach catechism, or giving discourses in public places, hospitals, and prisons. Never you fear losing credit with respectable people because they see you hearing the confessions of the poor, or yourself going about in the garb of a poor religious; rather thereby you gain authority, and reap more credit and reputation, and will do more good to souls, since God raises up the humble and is wont to work wonders through them.

But leaving aside this, which is the main reason, and taking the argument by way of human prudence and reason, you cannot find more effectual means to gain authority and good name among your neighbors and do much good to their souls than to employ yourself in those occupations which look lowly and humble, and all the more, the greater are your capacities. The reason thereof is this. So high is the value that the world attaches to honor and reputation and high things, that one of the things that its people

admire most is to see a man regardless of his own standing; to see one who might be engaged in high and honorable occupations, busying himself in lowly and humble ones; hence they conceive a high opinion and esteem of the sanctity of such and receive their teaching as coming from heaven.

We read of Father Francis Xavier in his Life that, on embarking for the Indies, refusing to take any outfit for his voyage, he met with earnest remonstrances from the Count de Castañeda, who was then minister of marine in those parts. The count begged him at least to take with him a servant to wait upon him at sea. He told him that he would lose credit and authority with the people whom he had to teach if they saw him with the rest washing his linen at the gunwale of the ship and cooking his own dinner. The father replied: "My lord count, this is what has reduced the Church of God and her prelates to the condition in which they are at this day, the attempt to gain credit and authority by the means which your lordship suggests. The means whereby credit and authority should be gained is by washing one's rags and cooking the pot without having need of anyone, and all the time employing oneself in the service of one's neighbors' souls." At this answer the count was so struck and edified that he had nothing more to reply. In this way and by this humility and simplicity authority is to be acquired, and in this way fruit of souls. And we see that Father Francis Xavier effected so much in the Indies by teaching catechism to children, and going about ringing the bell at night for the souls in purgatory, and serving and comforting the sick, and other lowly and humble offices. Thus he came to have so much authority and reputation that he stole away and drew to himself the hearts of all, and they called him "the holy Padre." This is the authority that is wanted for gaining fruit of souls—the name and reputation of humble men, the name and reputation of saints and preachers of the Gospel. So this it is that we should endeavor to procure; as for those airs of

authority and points of honor which savor and reek of the world, they rather do harm and give great disedification to our neighbor, as well to those outside the house as to those within.

On those words in St. John: *I do not seek my own glory, my Father takes account of that* (John viii. 50), a certain doctor says very well: "If, then, our heavenly Father seeks and safeguards our glory and our honor, there is no need for us to take care of it." Make it your policy to humble yourself and to be what you ought to be, and leave to God your credit and authority as a means to gather more fruit of souls; for where you humble and abase yourself, there you will the more raise yourself up, and gain a reputation very different from that which you might have gained by those human means and devices.

Neither, again, must you set before yourself the honor and authority of your order, which is another pretense that sometimes offers itself in this and in other matters, to cloak our own imperfection and want of mortification. "Oh, I do not this for myself, but for the credit of the order, which it is right should be respected and regarded." Leave alone these respects and regards. Your order will gain more by their seeing you humble, silent, and suffering; for in this consists the credit and reputation of a religious order, in its members' being humble and mortified and far removed from all savor and odor of the world.

Father Maffei in his "History of the Indies" relates that, while one of our fathers in Japan was preaching the faith of Christ our Redeemer in a public street of Firando, one of those heathens who happened to be passing that way made mockery of the preacher and, hawking up a great mass of phlegm, spat it in his face. The preacher drew out his handkerchief and wiped it off, without showing any concern and without uttering a word, and went on with his sermon in the same tenor and outward appearance as if nothing had happened. One of the hearers took great

notice of this and, seeing the great patience and humility of the preacher, began to think within himself: "It cannot be that a doctrine which teaches so much patience, so much humility and constancy of soul, should not come from heaven; this must be a thing of God," which made such an impression on him that he was moved to be converted. So he went up to the preacher at the end of the sermon, and begged him to instruct him in the faith and baptize him.

## CHAPTER XXX

### *Of the Third Degree of Humility*

THE third degree of humility is when one endowed with great virtues and gifts of God and standing high in the honor and esteem of men, is not proud of anything, nor attributes anything to himself, but refers and attributes everything to the same source, which is God, of Whom comes *every good and perfect gift* (James i. 14). This third degree of humility, says St. Bonaventure, is proper to good and perfect men, who, the greater they are, humble themselves the more in everything. That one who is evil and imperfect should know and rate himself for such, is no great matter; it is a good thing and praiseworthy, but no marvel, any more than it would be for the son of a peasant to have no mind to be taken for the son of a king, or for the poor to hold himself poor, and the invalid for invalid, and for such like persons to be willing to be taken for what they are. But for the rich to hold himself poor, and for the great to diminish himself and put himself on a level with the lowly, making himself small, that is a thing to wonder at. So, as the saint says, it is no marvel for one who is evil and imperfect to hold himself for evil and imperfect; rather it would be a strange thing if, being what he is, he took himself for a good and perfect person, as though a man full of leprosy took himself for a sound man. But for one who is far advanced in virtues and enjoys many gifts of



God and is truly great before His Divine Majesty to hold himself for a small and insignificant creature—that is great humility and a thing to marvel at.

St. Bernard says: "A great and rare virtue it is to do great deeds and not take oneself for great, but for slight and small—to have all the world holding you for a saint and an admirable man, while you yourself make little account of yourself. I take that to be more than all the rest of your virtues"—*Magna et rara virtus profecto est, cum magna opereris, magnum te nescire; cum omnibus nota sit sanctitas tua, te solum lateat; cum omnibus magnus appareas, tibi soli vilescas. Hoc ego ipsis virtutibus mirabilius iudico.* This humility was found most perfectly in the holy Queen of Angels, who, knowing herself to be chosen for Mother of God, with the deepest humility recognized herself for His servant and handmaid. St. Bernard says: "Being chosen for such a high dignity and great honor as to be Mother of God, she calls herself His handmaid; and being pronounced by the mouth of St. Elizabeth blessed amongst all women, she takes to herself no glory for those great endowments she has, but attributes them all to God, thanking Him and magnifying Him for them, while herself she remains entire and firm in the deepest humility." *My soul doth magnify*, and so forth (Luke i. 46). This the humility of heaven. There the blessed keep themselves in this humility. This, says St. Gregory, is what St. John saw in the Apocalypse of those four-and-twenty elders who, prostrate before the throne of God, adored Him, taking their crowns off their heads and casting them at the foot of the throne (Apoc. iv. 4, 10). He says that casting their crowns at the foot of the throne of God means attributing their victories, not to themselves, but all to God, Who gave them strength and virtue to overcome, thus giving Him the honor and glory of it all. *Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power and might, for thou hast created all things, and by*

*thy will they are and continue to be, as by that will they were created* (Apoc. iv. 11). It is right, O Lord, that we should give Thee the honor and glory of all, and take the crowns off our heads and cast them at Thy feet, for all is Thine, by Thy will it has been made, and if we have any good, it is because Thou hast willed it. This, then, is the third degree of humility, not to be elated at the gifts and graces that we have received from God, but to attribute and refer all to God, as author and giver of all good.

But someone may say: If humility consists in that, we are all humble; for who does not know that all good comes to us from God and that of ourselves we have nothing but sins and miseries? Which of us is there that does not say: If God were to withdraw His hand, I should be the worst man in the world? *Perdition is thine, O Israel: of me only cometh thy aid* (Osee xiii. 9). All blessings and all good things must come to us by conveyance of the liberality of God. This is the Catholic faith, and so it seems that we have all got this humility, since we all thoroughly believe this truth, of which Holy Writ is full. *Every good and perfect gift must come to us from above from the Father of lights* (James i. 17). And the Apostle St. Paul: *What hast thou that thou hast not received? For of ourselves we are not sufficient to have any good thought as coming from ourselves, but all our sufficiency is of God: it is God that worketh in us as well to will good as to put it in act according to his good will* (II Cor. iii. 5; Phil. ii. 13). He means that we cannot do anything, nor speak anything, nor desire anything, nor think anything, nor start anything helpful towards our salvation, without God, from Whom all our sufficiency proceeds.

And what clearer comparison could be given us to make us understand this than that which Christ Himself declares in His holy Gospel? *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remain in the vine, so neither can ye unless ye remain in me* (John xv. 4). Would you see the little or

nothing that you can do without Me? As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it be united with the vine, so none can do any meritorious work by himself, if he is not united with Me. *I am the vine, ye the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same shall bear much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing* (John xv. 5). What thing more fruitful than the branch united with the vine? And what thing more useless and good for nothing than the branch separated from the vine? What is it good for? God asks the Prophet Ezechiel: *What shall be done with the branch? It is of no use as timber to do any work of carpentry, nor to make a peg to put in a wall to hang anything on: the branch separated from the vine is no good but for the fire* (Ezech. xv. 2-4). Such are we if we are not united with the true life, which is Christ. *If anyone abideth not united with me, he shall be cast out and wither away, and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire, and he burneth* (John xv. 6). We are worthless except for the fire; if we are worth anything, it is by the grace of God, as St. Paul says: *By the grace of God I am what I am* (I Cor. xv. 10). It seems that we are all well grounded in this truth, that all the good that we have is of God, and that of ourselves we are nothing but sins, and that we have no good to attribute to ourselves, but all must go to God. This does not seem very difficult for one who believes, that we should assign it for the highest and most perfect degree of humility, since it is so plain a truth of faith. So it appears at first sight. Looking at it superficially and on the face of things, it seems easy; but it is not so, but difficult.

Cassian says that to beginners it seems an easy thing to attribute nothing to themselves, not to rest or confide in their own industry and diligence, but to refer and attribute all to God; but it is not so—it is very difficult. For as we ourselves also have some share in our good works, as we too *work and concur with God—Dei enim sumus adjutores* (I Cor. iii. 9), forthwith and almost imperceptibly we come

to rest and rely on ourselves, and there comes over our mind a secret presumption and pride, thinking that it was by our industry and diligence this was done and that; and so we proceed to pride and vanity and elation over the actions that we do, as though it were by our own strength that we did them, and as though they were wholly ours. This is not such an easy business as it appears. Enough for us to know that the saints assign this for the most perfect degree of humility, and say that it is the humility of great souls, so that we may understand that there is in it more difficulty and perfection than appears. For a man to receive great gifts of God and do great works, and be able to give to God the glory of it as he ought, without attributing to himself anything or taking in it any vain complacency, is a thing of high perfection. To be honored and praised as a saint, and not to have one's heart tainted by such honor and high appreciation any more than as though there were no such thing on the horizon, is a difficult thing, and few attain to it; much virtue is required for that.

St. Chrysostom says that to walk in the midst of honors without the heart's being tainted of him who is so honored, is like walking among beautiful women without ever looking upon them with other than chaste eyes. A difficult and dangerous thing that, and much virtue is required for it. A good head is needful to walk high up and not get giddy; not everyone has the head to walk on a height. The angels had it not in heaven, Lucifer and his companions, and so they got their heads turned and fell into the abyss of hell. They say that this was the sin of the angels, that God having created them so beautiful and so fair, with so many gifts natural and supernatural, they did not *stand in God* (*in veritate non stetit*, John viii. 44), nor attribute to Him the glory of it all, but they stood in themselves—not that they thought that they had these things of themselves, for they well knew that they were creatures, but because, as the Prophet Ezechiel says: *Thy heart is lifted up in thy*



*beauty, and thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy brilliant splendor* (Ezech. xxviii. 17). They became vain of their beauty, proud as peacocks of the gifts they had received from God, and reveled in them as though they had them of their own. They did not refer and attribute them all to God, giving Him the glory and honor thereof, but they grew vain and elated and foolishly self-satisfied, as though they had of themselves the good things that were theirs. Thus, though with their understanding they knew that glory was due to God, with their will they refused to give it and attributed it to themselves. You see that this degree of humility is not such an easy thing as it looks, since to the very angels it was a difficulty, and under it they fell from the height on which God had placed them, because they could not maintain themselves there. Now if the angels had not a head strong enough to walk on high, but grew vain and fell, much more reason have we to fear lest we grow vain if set and raised up on high, for we men are such poor creatures that we vanish into thin air like smoke (*honorificati et exaltati quemadmodum fumus deficient*, Psalm xxxvi. 20). As smoke, the higher it goes up, is the more undone and disappears, so miserable and proud man falls away into vanity, the more they honor him and raise him to high estate.

Oh, how well and how much to the point did Christ our Redeemer advise us of this! The holy Gospel relates that, after He had sent the seventy-two disciples to preach, they returned very well satisfied and in high glee from their mission, saying: "O Lord, we have done wonders; even the devils submitted and obeyed us in Thy name." The Redeemer answered very seriously: *I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven* (Luke x. 18). Beware of vain satisfaction; see how on that account Lucifer fell from heaven, because in that high estate in which he was created he grew full of vain self-complacency over the gifts that he had received, and did not attribute to God the glory and honor thereof as he should have done, but sought to exalt

himself therewith. Let not the same thing happen to you; do not you grow vain of the wonders and great things that you do in My name, nor take any vain complacency therein. These words are spoken to us. See that you do not grow proud of the fact that by your instrumentality much fruit is produced among your neighbors and many souls gained. Beware of taking any vain satisfaction in the applause and good opinion of men and the high regard they show you. See that you are not at all elated; see that honor and reputation do not taint your heart, for that is what made Lucifer fall, and of an angel turned him into a devil. Wherein you see, says St. Augustine, what an evil thing pride is, since of angels it makes devils; and, conversely, what a good thing is humility, which likens men to the holy angels.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### *Further Elucidation of the Third Degree of Humility*

WE have not done with giving a good account of what the third degree of humility consists in; and so it will be necessary to explain it a little further, that we may better put it into execution, which is our object. This third degree of humility, say the saints, consists in knowing how to distinguish between the gold that comes to us of God, the gold of His gifts and benefits, and the clay and misery that we are ourselves, and giving to each what belongs to him; attributing to God what is of God, and to ourselves what is ours; and all this must be done in practice, which is the point of this business. Thus humility does not consist in the speculative knowledge that of ourselves we can do nothing and are worth nothing, and that all good must come to us of God, and that He it is that works in us both to will and to begin and finish according to His free will and good pleasure, as St. Paul says (Phil. ii. 13)—for this speculative knowledge is easy, since faith tells

us so, and we Christians all know and believe accordingly—but in knowing and acting on this knowledge in practice, and in being as clear and firm-seated in this truth as though we saw it with our eyes and touched it with our hands. This is what St. Ambrose says is a most particular gift and great grace of God, quoting to this effect that saying of St. Paul: *We have not received the spirit of this world, but the spirit of God, that we may know and appreciate the gifts that we have received of him* (I Cor. ii. 12). For a man to know and recognize the gifts that he has received from God as being another's, and as received and given out of the liberality and mercy of God, is a special gift and favor of the Most High. The wise Solomon says that this is the height of wisdom. *I knew that I could not be continent unless God gave it me: and this was itself wisdom, to know whose gift it was.* Or, according to another reading, *this was the height of wisdom* (Wisdom viii. 21). Practically to understand and know that to be continent is not a thing that we can secure by our own strength, and that no labor or industry of ours is enough for this, but that it is a gift of God and must come to us from His hand, is the height of wisdom. Now in this which St. Paul says is a special gift and favor of God, and Solomon calls the height of wisdom, this degree of humility consists. *What hast thou that thou hast not received?* says the Apostle St. Paul. All that we have is received, coming from another; of ourselves we have just nothing. *If then thou hast received it, coming from another, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it, and as though it were thine own?* (I Cor. iv. 7).

This is the humility of the saints, that, while they are enriched with gifts and graces of God, and He has raised them to the height of perfection, and thereby to great honor and high estimation in the world, nevertheless they hold themselves so cheap in their own eyes, and their soul remains so wholly taken up with its own lowliness and humility, that it is as though it had none of these gifts.

There was no taint of vanity in their heart, nor did any of that honor and esteem in which the world held them affect them, because they knew well how to distinguish between what was another's and what was their own. Thus they regarded all gifts, honors, and reputation as belonging to another and received from God, and to Him they gave and attributed all the glory and praise thereof, themselves remaining plunged in their own lowliness, considering that of themselves they had nothing and were incapable of any good. Hence it came about that, though all the world exalted them, they were not elated, nor thought any more of themselves on that account, nor was their heart tainted by anything of all this, but they thought that those praises were not uttered or spoken of them, but of another, that is, God; and in Him and in His glory they placed all their joy and satisfaction.

Thus there is good reason for saying that this humility belongs to great and perfect men. First, because it supposes great virtues and gifts of God, which is that which makes a man great before Him. Secondly, because for a man to be truly great in the eyes of God and far advanced in virtue and perfection, and on that account highly regarded and appreciated by God and men, and still to hold himself cheap in his own eyes, is great and marvelous perfection. And this it is that St. Chrysostom and St. Bernard admire in the apostles and others, that, being such great saints, so laden with God's gifts, and His Majesty working through them such marvels and miracles as raising the dead, and they being on that account in such high repute with all the world, they remained as wholly lost in their humility and lowliness as though they had nothing of this, as though another did these things and not themselves, as though all that honor, credit, and praise were another's, and were paid to another and not to them.

St. Bernard says: "It is no great thing to humble yourself in poverty and low condition, because such a condition



of itself helps you to know yourself and keep within your own bounds; but for a man to be honored and thought much of by all and taken for a holy and admirable man, and still to remain as thoroughly convinced of the truth of his own lowliness and nothingness as if he had nothing of all that about him—that is a rare and excellent virtue and a thing of great perfection.” In such men, says St. Bernard, according to the Lord’s precept (Matt. v. 16) their light shines out brilliantly before men to glorify not themselves but their heavenly Father Who is in heaven. These are the true imitators of the Apostle St. Paul and of the Gospel preachers who preach not themselves but Jesus Christ (I Cor. iv. 15; II Cor. xii. 14). These are the good and faithful servants, who seek not their own interests, nor exalt themselves in any way, nor attribute anything to themselves, but attribute all faithfully to God and give Him the glory of all, and so shall hear from the mouth of the Lord those words: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things* (Matt. xxv. 21).

## CHAPTER XXXII

### *Further Elucidation of the Same*

WE have said that the third degree of humility is when a man, possessed of great virtues and gifts of God and held in high honor and esteem, takes no pride in anything, nor attributes anything to himself, but refers and attributes all to the same source, which is God, giving Him the glory of all, and remains all swallowed up in his lowliness and humility as though he had nothing and did nothing. We do not mean hereby to say that we do not also work and have our share in the good works that we do—for that would be a piece of ignorance and an error. It is clear that we and our free will concur and work jointly

with God in our good works; for man freely gives his consent to them, and on that account it is true to say that "man works," because of his own proper and free will he wills what he wills, and works what he works, and it is in his power not to do the work. Nay, this it is that makes this degree of humility so difficult; because on the one hand we ourselves have to put in act all our diligence, and use all the means we can, to gain virtue and resist temptation and bring our business to a successful issue, as if our efforts alone were sufficient for that purpose; and on the other hand, after having done that, we must distrust altogether what we have done as if we had done nothing, and hold ourselves for useless and unprofitable servants, and put our whole confidence in God. So He teaches us in the Gospel: *After ye have done all the things that are commanded you*—He does not say "some," but "all"—say: *We are unprofitable servants, we have done what we were bound to do* (Luke xvii. 10). But to do this, no little virtue is necessary. Cassian says: "Whoever shall come to know well that he is a useless servant, and that all the means and contrivances that he applies are not sufficient to do any good, but it must be the gracious gift of the Lord that does it, such a man will not grow proud over any success, because he will understand that he did not gain it by his own industry, but by the grace and mercy of God, as St. Paul says: *What hast thou that thou hast not received?* (I Cor. iv. 7)."

St. Augustine brings a good comparison to elucidate this. He says that without the grace of God we are no more than what a body is without a soul. As a dead body cannot move or handle anything, so we without the grace of God cannot do works of life or value before God. Now as it would be foolish for a body to attribute life and movement to itself, and not to the soul that is in it and gives it life, so that soul would be very blind who should attribute to herself the good work that she does, and not to God, Who has poured upon her the spirit of life, which is the grace

whereby she is enabled to do them. And elsewhere he says that, as the bodily eyes can see nothing, even though they are quite healthy, without the aid of light, so man, however justified he be, cannot lead a good life without the aid of the light and grace of God. *Unless the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman watcheth in vain* (Psalm cxxvi. 1). "Oh, that men knew themselves," says St. Augustine, "and would once for all understand that they have nothing in themselves to glory in, but only in God." Oh, that God would send us a ray of light from heaven to scatter our darkness and make us know and feel that there is no good, nor being, nor strength anywhere in the whole of creation but what the Lord of His gracious mercy has been pleased to give and is pleased to preserve! In this, then, consists the third degree of humility; only our brief words cannot reach so far as to declare the great and profound perfection there is in it. However much we say of it, now in one way, now in another, not only the practice but the theory of it too remains difficult.

This is that annihilation of self, so repeatedly recommended by the masters of spiritual life; this is that holding and confessing of oneself unworthy and useless for all things, *ad omnia indignum et inutilem se confiteri et credere*, which St. Benedict and other saints assign for the highest degree of humility; this is that distrust of self, and that fastening of oneself and hanging upon God, so commended in Holy Writ; this is that genuine taking of oneself for nothing, which at every step we hear and say, and never quite succeed in feeling in our hearts. Oh, that we understood and felt sincerely and practically—as a thing that we saw with our eyes and touched and felt with our hands—that of ourselves we have not, and cannot have, anything but perdition and sins, and that all the good that we have and do, we have it not and do it not of ourselves, and that His is the honor and glory of it all.

And if after all is said and done you still fail to understand the perfection of this degree of humility, be not astonished, for it is very high theology, and it is no matter of surprise that you do not understand it so easily. A doctor says that this happens in all arts and sciences, that everyone knows and understands the common and evident things, but not all attain to subtle and delicate points, but only those who are eminent in that art or science. So here the common and ordinary things of virtue anyone can understand; but special and subtle things, things lofty and delicate, are understood by those only who are eminent and advanced in that virtue. And this is what St. Lawrence Justinian says, that no one quite knows what sort of a thing humility is but he who has received of God grace to be humble. And this is how the saints, being men of most profound humility, feel and say of themselves things that we, who have not got so far, fail to understand and hold for exaggerations and pious fictions, as that they are the greatest sinners of all people in the world, and the like, as we shall say presently. And if we are unable to say or feel these things and cannot even quite understand them, it is because we have not attained to such humility as they, and so we do not understand the subtle and delicate points of this faculty. Do you contrive to be humble, and grow continually in this science, and progress further and further in it, and then you will understand how they can say such things with truth.

### CHAPTER XXXIII

#### *Further Elucidation of the Third Degree of Humility, and How It Comes Thereof that the Truly Humble Takes Himself for the Least of All*

**T**HAT we may better understand this third degree of humility and be able to establish ourselves well in it, it is necessary to take the water further upstream. As we



said above, all our natural being and all our natural activities we hold of God; of ourselves we are nothing, and therefore we have no power to move, nor to see, nor to hear, nor to taste, nor to understand, nor to will; but God gives us our natural being, and therewith He gives us all its powers and capabilities, and so to Him we have to attribute at once its being and its natural activities. In like manner and with much more reason must we speak of our supernatural being and works of grace, and that all the more as they are greater and more excellent. The supernatural being that we have we have not of ourselves, but of God; in short, it is a being of grace (*gratia*), which is so called because it is added unto our natural being gratuitously. We are born in sin, *children of wrath* (Eph. ii. 3), enemies of God, Who hath *drawn us out of this darkness into his admirable light* (I Pet. ii. 9). God has made us of enemies, friends; of slaves, sons; of good-for-nothingness, beings agreeable in His eyes. And the reason why He has done this has been no merits of ours, nor any regard for services that we have rendered Him, but purely His goodness and mercy, as St. Paul says, *being justified gratuitously by the grace of God, by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus* (Rom. iii. 24), and by the merits of Christ our only Redeemer.

Now as we could not of ourselves emerge from the nothingness in which we were to the natural being that we enjoy, nor could we do any vital actions, such as seeing, hearing, or feeling, but all that came by the gracious gift of God, and to Him we have to ascribe it all without being able to put down to our glory any part of it; so neither could we emerge from the darkness of sin, in which we were conceived and born, if God by His infinite goodness and mercy did not draw us out of it; nor could we do works of life if He did not give us His grace thereto. For the value and merit of our works arises not from anything that we held of ourselves, but from what we hold by the

grace of the Lord, as the value of coin is not of itself, but of the stamp impressed upon it. Thus we must not attribute to ourselves any glory, but all to God, to Whom natural and supernatural alike belong, having ever in our mouth and in our heart that saying of St. Paul: *By the grace of God I am what I am* (I Cor. xv. 10).

But as we were saying that not only has God drawn us out of nothingness and given us the being that we have, but also, since we were created and received being, we do not hold it of ourselves, but of God sustaining us, holding us up, and supporting us by His almighty hand that we fall not into the deep well of nothingness out of which He originally drew us; in like manner in the supernatural order not only has God done us the favor of drawing us out of the darkness of sins, in which we were, to the admirable light of His grace, but He is ever preserving us and holding us by His hand, that we fall not back again. Thus if for one moment God retired, and withdrew His hand and guard over us, and allowed the devil to tempt us as he would like, we should fall back into our past sins and others worse. *God is ever at my right hand lest I be upset*, says the Prophet David (Psalm xv. 8). Thou art always at my right hand, holding me that I be not overthrown. It is Thy work, O Lord, to raise us up from our faults, and Thine again our not having fallen back again into them; if I rise, it is because Thou lendest me a hand; and if at this hour I am on my feet, it is because Thou holdest me to keep me from falling. Now as we were saying that this is enough to keep us in our nothingness, that on our part nothingness we are, nothingness we were, and nothingness we should be if God were not ever conserving us, so it is also enough to make us hold ourselves for sinners and wicked creatures that on our part such we are, and such we were, and such we should be, if God's hand were not ever supporting us.

So says Albertus Magnus that whoever wishes to gain humility must plant in his heart the root of humility, which

is the knowledge of his own weakness and misery, and right well understand and ponder, not only how vile and miserable he is now, but how vile and miserable he might be and would be at this day if God by His mighty hand did not remove him from sins, and keep him out of occasions thereof, and help him under temptation. Into how many sins should I have fallen, if Thou, O Lord, hadst not in Thy infinite mercy delivered me! How many occasions of sin hast Thou saved me from, that would have been enough to overthrow me, since they overthrew David, if Thou hadst not put a check upon them, knowing my weakness! How many times hast Thou tied the hands of the devil, that he might not tempt me as much as he could; and if he did tempt, that he might not overcome me! How many times might I have said with truth those words of the prophet: *Lord, if Thou hadst not helped me, by this time my soul would have been in hell* (Psalm xciii. 17)! How many times have I been assailed and turned upside down to the very brink of falling, and Thou, O Lord, hast held me, and laid Thy loving and mighty hand upon me, that it might not hurt me! *If I said to thee, my feet have slipped; at once thy mercy came to my aid* (Psalm xciii. 18). Oh, how many times should we have been lost ere now if God in His infinite goodness and mercy had not kept us safe! This, then, is the attitude which we ought to take up, because this is what we are, and this is what we have on our part; this is what we have been, and what we should be now if God were to withdraw and take away His hand from keeping us.

From this the saints came to such sentiments of shame and confusion, self-contempt and self-humiliation, that, not content with thinking little of themselves and taking themselves for wicked men and sinners, they made themselves out to be the least and last of all, the vilest and most sinful of all men in the world. Such a man as St. Francis—of whom we read that God had raised and exalted him so high

that his companion, being in prayer, saw prepared for him among the seraphim a chair richly alight with many-colored enamels and jewels—this St. Francis, when the question was put to him afterwards: “Father, what is your own estimate of yourself?” answered: “I believe that there is not in the world a greater sinner than I am.” And the same thing was said by the glorious Apostle St. Paul: *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first and chiefest* (I Tim. i. 15). And thus he admonishes us to endeavor to attain such humility as to hold ourselves inferior to all and least of all, and recognize all for our superiors and betters. St. Augustine says: “The Apostle is not leading us astray when he bids us (Phil. ii. 3-4) take ourselves for the least and reckon all for greater than and superior to ourselves, nor is he bidding us speak words of vain compliment and flattery.” The saints practised no lying nor pretended humility in saying that they were the greatest sinners in the world, but spoke the truth as they felt it in their hearts. And so they charge us to have the same sentiment, and speak it out without affectation and not for mere form’s sake.

St. Bernard makes excellent reflection to this purpose on our Savior’s saying: *When thou art invited to a feast, seat thyself in the last place* (Luke xiv. 10). He did not say, “Choose a middle place,” or “Seat thyself among the last or in the last place but one,” but He absolutely wishes you to take the last place. Not only must you not prefer yourself to any, but you must not presume to compare or equalize yourself with anyone; you must absolutely stay in the last place, without companion in your abasement, holding yourself for the most miserable and sinful of all. There is no danger, he says, in humbling yourself much and setting yourself below the feet of all; but to prefer yourself to a single one is a thing you cannot do without much harm’s coming of it. And he applies this common comparison. When you pass under a low doorway, you cannot



hurt yourself by lowering your head too much, but in lowering it ever so little less than the doorway requires you, the doorway will do you much hurt and break your head. So the soul that abases and humbles herself cannot suffer any harm; but to humble onself a little, and claim to excel or equal even only one person, is a dangerous thing. How do you know but that the man, though there is but one, who you think is not only a worse man than you, but is the wickedest of the wicked and perhaps the greatest sinner of sinners, you taking it for granted perhaps that you are now leading a good life, may be better than they and better than you, and whether he is not so already in the eyes of God? Who knows but that God will cross His hands, as Jacob did (Gen. xlviii. 14), and change men's destinies, and that you will be the disinherited and the other the elect? How do you know what God has worked in his heart from yesterday till this moment, and that in one instant? *It is easy in the eyes of God suddenly to enrich the poor* (Ecclus. xi. 23). In an instant God can make His apostles out of a publican and a persecutor of the Church, as He did with St. Matthew and St. Paul. Of obdurate sinners and hearts harder than adamant He can make sons of God (Matt. iii. 9). How much mistaken was that Pharisee (Luke vii. 39), who judged Magdalen for a wicked woman, and how did Christ our Redeemer rebuke him and give him to understand that she whom he took for a public sinner was a better person than he was! And so St. Benedict, St. Thomas, and other saints assign this for one of the twelve degrees of humility, to say and feel of oneself that one is the worst man of all—*credere et pronuntiare se omnibus viliozem*. It is not enough to say this with your lips, but you must think so in your heart. "Think not that you have made any advance, if you do not account yourself the worst of all," says that holy man (À Kempis).

## CHAPTER XXXIV

*How Good and Holy Men Can with Truth Hold Themselves to Be the Least of All and Say that They Are the Greatest Sinners in the World*

IT will be no curious speculation, but a very profitable instruction, to explain how good and holy men could with truth hold themselves for the least and last of all and say they were the greatest sinners in the world—seeing that we say we ought to make it our endeavor to attain to that point of view. Some saints do not care to give any answer to this question, but are content with thinking so in their hearts. St. Dorotheus tells how the Abbot Zosimus was one day discoursing on humility, and said so of himself. There happened to be there a sophist, or philosopher, who asked him: “How can you say that you are a sinner, since you know that you keep God’s commandments?” The holy abbot answered him: “I know that what I say is true, and so I feel it to be; do not ask me.” But St. Augustine, St. Thomas, and other saints answer this question, and give different answers. That of St. Augustine and of St. Thomas is that, when a man keeps before his eyes the defects that he knows in himself and considers in his neighbor the secret gifts that he has, or may have, of God, anyone may say of himself with truth that he is a viler and greater sinner than all, because I know my defects alone, and I do not know the secret gifts which the other man has of God. “Oh, but I see that he commits so many sins which I do not commit.” “And how do you know what God has worked in his heart just at this last moment?” In a moment, secretly and suddenly, he may have received some gift and favor of God whereby he has made a great start forward, as happened to that Pharisee and that publican of the Gospel, who entered into the Temple to pray. *Verily I say unto you*, says Christ our Redeemer (Luke xviii. 14),

that the publican, who was held to be a bad man, came out from there justified; and the Pharisee, who took himself for a good man, came out condemned. That ought to be enough to make us take warning never to dare to prefer ourselves, or compare ourselves with anybody, but to remain alone in the last place, which is the safe place.

To him who is truly humble at heart it is an easy thing to hold himself the least of all. The truly humble man considers in others the virtue and good that they have, and in himself his own defects, and is so continually taken up with the knowledge and correction of these as never to raise his eyes to look at other people's faults, thinking that he has enough to do with bewailing his own woes; and so he takes his neighbors all for good people, and himself alone for evil. And the holier a man is, the easier is this for him to do, because, as he grows in other virtues, he grows likewise in humility and self-knowledge, for all these things go together. And the more light and knowledge he has of the goodness and majesty of God, the deeper knowledge he has of his own misery and nothingness, since *abyss cries to abyss* (Psalm xli. 8). The abyss of knowledge of the goodness and greatness of God reveals the abyss and depth of our misery, and shows to the eye the endless specks and motes of our imperfections. If we hold ourselves of any account, it is because we have but slight knowledge of God and little light from heaven. The rays of the Sun of Justice have not entered by the gates of our soul; and so not only do we not see the specks, which are our minute faults and imperfections, but we are so short-sighted, or rather we are so blind, that even grave faults escape our eyes.

Add to this that God so loves humility, and is so pleased with a man making little of himself and keeping to that, that in dealing with His great servants, on whom He bestows many favors and benefits, He is wont often so much to disguise His gifts and to impart them so hiddenly

and so secretly that the recipient himself does not understand, and thinks that he is receiving nothing. St. Jerome says: "All the beauty of that tabernacle (Exod. xxxvi. 19) was covered with sackcloth and skins of beasts." So God is wont to cover and hide away the beauty of virtues and of His gifts and benefits; and this He does by divers temptations, and at times by certain faults and imperfections which He permits, that so His gifts may be the better preserved, like live coals covered over with ashes. St. John Climacus says that, as the devil endeavors to put before us our virtues and good works, to make us proud, since he wishes evil to us, so God our Lord, wishing our greater good, is wont to give special light to His servants to know their faults and imperfections, and to throw a veil over and disguise His gifts so that the recipient himself does not recognize them. This is the common doctrine of the saints. St. Bernard says: "To preserve humility in His servants, the Divine Goodness often arranges things in such a way that, the farther a man advances, the less does he think that he is advancing; and when he has reached the highest degree of virtue, God allows to remain in him some imperfection in point of the first degree, so that he thinks that he has not reached even that." St. Gregory observes the same in many places.

On this account some make a very good comparison touching humility, and say that it stands to the other virtues as the sun to the other stars; in this way, that, as when the sun appears, the other stars disappear and cover up, so where there is humility in the soul, the other virtues are occulted, and the humble man fancies that he has no virtue. St. Gregory says: "While their virtues are manifest to all the world, they alone do not see them." Holy Writ relates of Moses that, after having come forth from speaking with God, he carried a great brightness on his face, and the children of Israel saw it, but he did not (Exod. xxxiv. 29); so the humble man does not see in himself any



virtue; all that he sees are his faults and imperfections, and he believes that what he knows is only the lesser part of his shortcomings, and that there are many more that he does not know. Hereby it is easy for him to take himself for the least of all, and for the greatest sinner of all people in the world.

To tell the whole truth, as there are many and diverse ways by which God leads His elect, though He leads many by the way that we have said, throwing a veil over His gifts so that the recipients themselves may not see them, nor think that they have them; yet to others He manifests them, and makes them know them, that they may set store by them and be grateful for them. And so said the Apostle St. Paul: *We have received, not the spirit of this world, but the spirit of God, that we may know the gifts that we have received at his hand* (I Cor. ii. 12). And the most holy Queen of Angels knew very well and recognized the great gifts and favors that she enjoyed and had received of God. *My soul doth magnify the Lord, for he that is almighty hath done great things in me* (Luke i. 49). And this is not only not contrary to humility and perfection, but goes with such a high and exalted humility that on that account the saints call it the humility of great and perfect men.

But there is here a great danger and delusion to which the saints call attention; it is that some people think they have more gifts of God than they have. Under such illusion lay that wretched man to whom God sent a message in the Apocalypse (iii. 17): *Thou sayest, I am rich and want for nothing; and thou knowest not that thou art miserable and poor and blind and naked*. Under the same lay that Pharisee in the Gospel (Luke xviii. 11), who gave thanks to God that he was not as other men, taking himself for a better man than he was and setting himself above others. And sometimes this pride enters into us so stealthily and secretly that almost unconsciously we are full of ourselves and self-esteem. A great remedy for this is to keep our

eyes always open to other people's virtues and closed to our own, and so to live always in a holy fear, whereby the gifts of God are more securely guarded.

But after all, as our Lord is not tied to this, and leads His own by divers ways, He is sometimes pleased to do this favor to His servants, that they do know the gifts which they have received at His hand. And then there seems to be a greater difficulty in the question proposed, how these holy and spiritual men, who know and see in themselves great gifts which they have received from God, can really rate themselves below all and say that they are the greatest sinners in the world. When our Lord conducts a man by that other way of throwing a veil over His gifts, and not letting him see in himself any virtue, but all faults and imperfections, there is no such great difficulty; but how can it be so in others? It may very well be so notwithstanding; be you as humble as St. Francis, and you will understand how. When his companion asked him how he could in truth think and say this of himself, the seraphic father answered: "Truly I understand and believe that, if God had done to a highwayman, or to the greatest of all sinners, the mercies and favors that He has done to me, he would be a much better man than I am, and more grateful than I. And on the other hand I understand and believe that, if God withdrew His hand from me and did not hold me up, I should commit greater sins than all the rest of mankind and be the worst of them all. And therefore," he went on to say, "I am the greatest sinner and the most ungrateful of all men." This is a very good answer, a very profound humility, and a marvelous doctrine. This knowledge and consideration is what made the saints bury themselves beneath the earth, and prostrate themselves at the feet of all, and take themselves sincerely for the greatest sinners in the world; because they had well planted and rooted in their hearts the root of humility, which is the knowledge of one's own weakness and misery and the

knowing how to penetrate and ponder well what they were and had of themselves. This made them believe that, if God withdrew His hand and did not continually hold them up, they would be the greatest sinners in the world, and so they held themselves to be such. And the gifts and benefits that they had received from God they regarded, not as a thing of their own, but as another's property lent to them. So this consciousness of what God had done for them was no obstacle to throw them off the line, because they remained whole and entire in their humility and self-abasement, holding themselves for the least of all; rather it aided them thereto, since they thought that they had not profited of God's gifts as they should have done. Thus whichever way we turn our eyes, now fixing them on what we have of our own, now raising them to what we have received from God, we shall find abundant occasion to humble ourselves and hold ourselves for the least of all.

St. Gregory ponders to this purpose those words that David said to Saul when he might have murdered him in the cave that he had gone into, but spared him and let him go: *Whom dost thou pursue, O King of Israel? Whom dost thou pursue? Thou pursuest a dead dog, and one poor flea* (I Kings xxiv. 15). Yet David was already anointed king, and knew from the Prophet Samuel, who anointed him, that God purposed to take away the kingdom from Saul and give it to him; nevertheless he humbled himself, and disparaged himself before Saul, knowing well that God had preferred him to him, and that he was the better man of the two; that hence we may learn to hold ourselves inferior to others, about whom we do not know in what rank they stand before God.

## CHAPTER XXXV

*That This Third Degree of Humility Is the Means to  
Overcome All Temptations and Obtain the  
Perfection of All Virtues*

CASSIAN says that it was the tradition of those ancient Fathers, and a sort of first principle among them, that one cannot obtain purity of heart, nor the perfection of virtues, unless one first knows and understands that all one's industry, diligence, and labor is not sufficient thereunto without the special aid and favor of God, Who is the author and giver of all good. And this knowledge he says must not be speculative, because so we have heard and read, and faith tells us so, but we must know it practically and by experience, and be as settled and resolved upon this truth as though we saw it with our eyes and touched it with our hands; which description answers word for word to that third degree of humility of which we have been treating. And of this humility are to be understood those innumerable texts of Holy Writ which promise good things to the humble. And therefore with much reason do the saints assign this for the highest and most perfect degree of humility, and say that it is the foundation of all virtues and the preparation and disposition to receive all the gifts of God.

Cassian follows this matter up more particularly, treating of chastity. He says that no labor avails to gain it until we understand by experience that we cannot gain it of our own strength, but it must come to us from the bounty and mercy of God. St. Augustine quite agrees with this, since the first and principal means that he assigns for gaining and preserving the gift of chastity is this humility, not allowing you to think that your own power and efforts are sufficient—you deserve to lose it if you take your stand upon that; but you must understand it to be a gift of God



that must come to you from on high, and therein you must place all your confidence. And so said an old man of those ancient Fathers, that a certain person would go on being tempted in the flesh until he well made up his mind that chastity is the Lord's gift, and not the fruit of our own strength.

Palladius confirms this by the example of Abbot Moses, a man of wonderful strength of body, united to a most vicious soul, who at last was converted with all his heart to God. He was at the outset of his conversion very severely tempted, to impurity especially, and by advice of the holy Fathers took the usual means to meet these attacks. He prayed so much that for six years he spent the greater part of the night in prayer, standing up, without sleeping. He worked hard with his hands; he ate nothing but a little bread; he went round the cells of the aged monks, carrying water; and practised other great mortifications and austerities. For all that, he did not succeed in getting the better of his temptations; he was on fire with them and in great danger of falling and abandoning his profession as a monk. While he was in this distress, there came to him the holy Abbot Isidore, and said to him on the part of God: "From this moment in the name of Jesus Christ all your temptations shall cease." And so it was; they never came again. And the saint went on to declare to him the reason why hitherto God had not given him a complete victory over them. "Moses, it was that you might not glory, thinking that your own practices had given you the victory, and therefore God allowed this long struggle for your benefit." This Moses had not gained the gift of distrust of himself, and God left him so long that he might gain it and not fall into pride. For all his heroic and holy practices he did not gain that victory over this passion which others have gained with less labor.

The same Palladius relates of Abbot Pacon that, though he was an old man of seventy years, he was much molested

with impure temptations. He said and affirmed on oath that after he was fifty years of age, so severe was the struggle and so habitual the combat, that he never passed a day or night all that time without being assailed by this vice. He did many extraordinary things to rid himself of these temptations, and they did him no good. One day while he was lamenting, thinking that the Lord had abandoned him, he heard a voice that said to him interiorly: "Understand that the reason why God has permitted in you this severe conflict has been to teach you your weakness and poverty, and the little or nothing that you have of your own, that so you may humble yourself henceforth, not trusting in anything of your own, but recurring in all cases to Me and asking My aid." And he added that that teaching so consoled and comforted him that he never felt the temptation any more. God wishes that we place all our confidence in Him, and distrust ourselves and our own methods and contrivances.

This doctrine is taught us not only by Augustine, Cassian, and those ancient Fathers, but by the Holy Ghost Himself in set terms. The Wise Man in the Book of Wisdom joins theory and practice together thus: *As I knew that I could not be continent otherwise than by the gift of God—and that itself was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was—I approached the Lord, and besought him, and spoke from the depths of my heart* (Wisdom viii. 21). *Continent* (ἐγκρατής) here is a general name, embracing not only the restraint of the passion that is contrary to chastity, but of all the other passions and appetites that militate against reason; so that text of Ecclesiasticus (xxvi. 12): *No weight of silver is worthy to be put in the scales against a continent soul.* A continent soul means one who in all directions keeps in and restrains his affections and appetites, that they stray not beyond the bounds of virtue and reason. Solomon then (Wisdom viii. 21) means to say: "Knowing what I knew, that without a special gift of God

I could not always contain those powers and passions of my soul and body within that golden mean of truth and virtue, but that they must sometimes overleap it—and to know this was great wisdom—I had recourse to the Lord and entreated Him with all my heart.” Thus this is the only way to be continent, and to be able to restrain and govern our passions, and keep them within bounds, and gain victory over all temptations and the perfection of all virtues. This the prophet quite recognized when he said: *Unless the Lord build the house, in vain have they labored who build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain who keepeth it* (Psalm cxxvi. 1).

## CHAPTER XXXVI

*That Humility Is Not Contrary to Magnanimity, but Is  
the Foundation and Cause Thereof*

ST. THOMAS, treating of the virtue of magnanimity, puts this question: On the one hand the saints say, and the holy Gospel says the same, that humility is very necessary for us; and on the other hand magnanimity also is very necessary, especially for those who hold high offices and ministrations. These two virtues, then, seem contrary to one another; since magnanimity is a greatness of soul, ready to undertake and meet great and excellent calls, and hold offices in themselves worthy of honor, and both the one and the other undertaking seems contrary to humility. As regards the former, which is the undertaking of great things, it seems incompatible with humility, since one of the degrees of humility which the saints assign consists in confessing and holding oneself for unworthy and useless for any and every thing—*ad omnia indignum et inutilem se confiteri et credere*; and for a man to undertake a business to which he is inadequate, seems pride and presumption. As for the second requisite, which is the taking of posts

of honor, it seems likewise contrary to that; since the truly humble man must be very far from desiring honor and distinction.

St. Thomas answers all this very well, and says that though, looking at the outward appearance and sound of things, these two virtues seem contrary to one another, yet in fact no virtue can be contrary to another; and he says of these two in particular, humility and magnanimity, that, if we look attentively to the truth and substance of the thing, we shall find them not only not contrary, but very akin and dependent on one another. And he explains this very well. For as to the first point, which is undertaking great things and meeting great calls as is proper for the magnanimous man to do, not only is this not contrary to the status of the humble man, but is very properly his work, and he is the only man who can do it well. If we were to undertake great things, trusting in our own strength and resources, that would be presumption and pride, since neither great things nor little things can we do of our own strength, since *we are not sufficient of ourselves to have even a good thought*, as the Apostle St. Paul says (II Cor. iii. 5). But the firm foundation of this virtue of magnanimity, for the meeting and undertaking of great things, must be distrust of ourselves and of all human means and putting our trust in God, and this is what humility does. That is why the saints call humility the foundation of all virtues, because it opens the ground, sinks the foundations, casts out the sand and loose earth of our own powers, until it comes to the living rock, which is Christ, and thereon it builds.

The glorious Bernard, on that passage of the Canticles: *Who is she that cometh up from the desert laden with rich spices, resting upon her beloved?* (Cant. viii. 5), explains at length how all our virtue and strength and all our good works must rest upon our Beloved. He brings in the example of St. Paul (I Cor. xv. 10): *By the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace in me hath not been made void.*



*I have labored more abundantly than all.* The Apostle begins to recount his labors and the great share that he has had in the preaching of the Gospel and the service of the Church, until he comes to say that he has labored more than the rest of the apostles. "Look to what you are saying, holy Apostle!" cries St. Bernard; "that you may be able to say this and not lose it all, rest upon your Beloved." He immediately does rest upon his Beloved: *Not I, but the grace of God in me.* And, writing to the Philippians, he says: *I can do all things*, and forthwith resting upon his Beloved, he adds, *in him that strengtheneth me* (Phil. iv. 13). In God we can do all, with His grace we shall be a match for all, on that we must rest, and that must be the ground of our magnanimity and greatness of soul.

And this is what the Prophet Isaias says: *They who distrust themselves and put all their trust in the Lord, shall change their strength* (Isaias xl. 31), for they shall change the strength of men, which is weakness, into the strength of God, exchanging the weak arm of flesh for the strong arm of God; so they shall be strong and powerful for everything, because in God they can do all. And so St. Leo very well said: The truly humble man is the magnanimous man, courageous and strong to meet and undertake great things; nothing shall be to him arduous or difficult, since he does not trust in himself, but in God, fixing his eyes on God and resting on Him. *With the help of God we will do doughty deeds, and he will bring our enemies to nothing* (Psalm lix. 14). In God all things are possible. This is a thing that we have great need of—great courage and strength and confidence in God, not fits of discouragement, which take away all heart for doing our work. Thus in ourselves we must be humble, knowing that of ourselves we are good for nothing, of no avail or competence for anything; but in God and in His might and grace we must be courageous and vigorous to undertake great things.

St. Basil explains this very well on those words of Isaias: *Here I am, send me* (vi. 8). God wished to send someone to preach to His people; and as He wishes to do things through us with our will and consent, He said where Isaias could hear Him: *Whom shall I send, who will go willingly?* The prophet answered: *Lord, here I am, if thou wilt to send me.* St. Basil makes a good reflection. He did not say: "Lord, I will go and do it right well," because he was humble and knew his weakness, and saw that it would be a piece of presumption to promise of himself to do such a great thing, a thing surpassing all his powers; but he says: "Lord, here I am, quite ready and disposed to receive what Thou shalt wish to give me; do Thou send me, because if Thou sendest me I will go." As though he would say: "I am not sufficient for so high a ministry as this, but Thou canst give me sufficiency. Thou canst put words in my mouth to change hearts; if Thou sendest me, I shall be able to go and be sufficient for the work, going in Thy name." And God says to him, "Go." You see here, says St. Basil, the Prophet Isaias given his degree as preacher and apostle of God because he showed himself competent to respond very well in the matter of humility, since he did not ascribe the going to himself, but recognized his own insufficiency and weakness and put all his confidence in God, believing that in Him he could do all, and if He sent him, he should be able to go. Therefore God gives him his degree, making him His preacher, ambassador, and apostle. This should be our strength and our magnanimity, emboldening us to meet and undertake great things. Therefore do not you be disheartened or discouraged at your weakness and insufficiency. *Say not that thou art an infant and canst not speak,* says God to Jeremy, *for to all that I shall send thee thou shalt go, and shalt do all that I shall command thee. Fear not, for I will be with thee* (Jerem. i. 7-8). Thus on this side humility is not only not contrary to magnanimity, but is the root and foundation of it.

Neither is the second mark of the magnanimous man, which is the desire of doing great things and things in themselves deserving of honor, contrary to humility; because, as St. Thomas well says, though the magnanimous man desires to do this, he does not desire it for the sake of human honor, nor is that his end—to deserve it, yes, but not to go after it or value it. Rather he keeps his heart so regardless of honors and disgraces that he reckons nothing great but virtue, and the love of that animates him to do great things, despising the honor of men. For virtue is a thing so high that it cannot be sufficiently honored or rewarded by men, since it deserves to be honored and rewarded by God. Thus the magnanimous man makes no account of the honor of the world; it is a thing too low and worthless for him; his flight soars higher; it is the sole love of God and virtue that moves him to do great works and deeds, despising all the rest.

But to keep a heart so great, so generous, so regardless of the honors and dishonors of men, as the heart of the magnanimous man must be, requires great humility. To arrive at such perfection that you can say with St. Paul: *I know how to behave alike in humiliation and in abundance and prosperity, alike in satiety and in hunger* (Phil. iv. 12)—that winds so violent and contrary as honor and dishonor, praises and complaints, favors and persecutions (II Cor. vi. 8), should work in us no change, nor make us stumble, but that we should always remain in one and the same frame of mind—a great foundation of humility and heavenly wisdom is necessary. I know not whether you would be able to steer your course in the midst of abundance, as the Apostle St. Paul did. To suffer poverty, to beg, to be a sojourner walking humbly in the midst of insults and affronts—perhaps you would be able to do that; but to be humble in the midst of honors, promotion to professors' chairs, pulpits, and high ministries, I am not sure of your competence there. Alas, even the angels were not

competent for that, but lost their heads in vanity and fell. Even the philosopher Boethius said: "Although every change of fortune is to be feared, yet prosperity is more to be feared than adversity." *Cum omnis fortuna timenda sit, magis tamen timenda est prospera quam adversa.* It is more difficult to keep oneself in humility in the midst of honors and worldly reputation and high offices than in slights and incivilities and in lowly and humble duties, because the latter carry humility with them, and the former pride and vanity. *Knowledge puffeth up* (I Cor. viii. 1). Knowledge and other high things of their own nature puff men up and fill them with vanity. Therefore the saints say that it is the humility of great and perfect men to be able to keep humble in the midst of great gifts and favors received from God and the honors and esteem of the world.

There is related of the blessed St. Francis a thing that seems very different from the occasion when he set to kneading the mud with his feet to escape the honorable reception which the townspeople were prepared to give him. He came once into a town, and they showed him great honor for the opinion and esteem they had of his sanctity; they crowded to kiss his habit, his hands and his feet, and he offered no resistance. His companion judged that he took pleasure in this honor, and the temptation so far overcame him that in the end he spoke to him to that effect. The saint replied: "These people, brother, are doing nothing in comparison with the honor which they ought to pay." His companion was more scandalized than ever at this reply, for he did not understand it. Then the saint said to him: "Brother, this honor which you see them do me I do not attribute to myself, but refer it all to God, to Whom it belongs, keeping myself in the depths of my unworthiness, while they gain thereby, since they recognize and honor God in His creature." His companion was satisfied, and marveled at the perfection of the saint, and with good reason, since to be regarded and honored as a



saint, which is the highest honor and esteem in which one can be held, and to know how to give to God the glory of it, as one ought, without attributing anything to oneself and without the honey's sticking to one's hands, or taking any vain satisfaction therein, but remaining as deep plunged in one's humility and lowliness as though one had no part therein, and as though the honor were being paid not to oneself, but to another—this is very high perfection and a most profound humility.

Now this is the humility to which we ought to aspire, especially those of us who are called, not to be put into a corner and hidden beneath the dustbin, but to be set on high like a city seated on a mountain, and like a cresset on a stand to enlighten and give light to the world. For such a position it is necessary to have laid one's foundations deep, and to have a great desire, so far as it rests with us, to be despised and disregarded, a desire springing from a deep sense of our own misery and vileness and nothingness, such a desire as St. Francis had when he fell to kneading the clay with his feet in order to be taken for a fool. From this deep self-knowledge which he had, and from which came his desire to be despised and disregarded, it also came about that, when they honored him and kissed his habit and feet, he felt no vanity and thought no more of himself on that account, but remained plunged in his lowliness and humility as if they were paying him no honor, attributing and referring it all to God. Thus, though these two actions of St. Francis seem so contrary to one another, they sprang from the same root and spirit of humility.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

*Of Other Good Things and Great Advantages There Are in This Third Degree of Humility*

**T**HINE are all things, and what we have received at thy hand we have given thee (I Chron. xxix. 14). After King David had made ready much store of gold and silver and building materials for the edifice and fabric of the Temple, he spoke the above words. That is what we ought to do and say in all our good works: "Lord, all our good works are Thine, and so we give back that which Thou hast given us." St. Augustine says very well: "Whoever sets himself to reckoning up to Thee his merits and the services he has rendered Thee, what else does he recount, O Lord, but the gifts and benefits which he has received at Thy hand?"—*Quisquis tibi enumerat merita sua, quid tibi enumerat nisi munera tua?* This is Thy bounty and liberality, that Thou wishest that Thy gifts and benefits should be new merits of ours; and thus when Thou payest our services, Thou rewardest Thine own benefits, and for one favor Thou grantest us another. Like another Joseph, the Lord is not content with giving us the wheat, but he gives us also the money and the price along with the article (Gen. xlv. 23). *The Lord will give grace and glory* (Psalm lxxxiii. 12). Everything is the gift of God, and everything we ought to attribute and return to Him.

One of the good things and great advantages that there are in the third degree of humility is this, that it is a form of good and true gratitude and thanksgiving for benefits received from God. It is a well-known thing how much this returning of thanks is commended and prized in Holy Writ. Thus we see that, when the Lord did any signal benefit to His people, He at once ordered some memorial and feast in thanksgiving, because of the great importance it is for us to be grateful in order to receive of Him new

graces and favors. Now this is done very well in this third degree of humility, which, as has been said, consists in man's not attributing to himself any good thing, but attributing all to God and giving Him the glory of all. In this lies good and true gratitude and thanksgiving, not in saying with the lips: "I give Thee thanks, O Lord, for Thy benefits," although with our lips also we ought to praise God and give thanks. But if you do it only with your lips, it will not be "giving thanks," but "saying Thank you." That it may be not merely saying Thank you, but giving thanks, and that not only with the lips, but also in heart and deed, we must recognize that all the good that we have is of God; we must return and attribute all to Him, giving Him the glory without exalting ourselves in anything. In this way man strips himself of the honor, which he sees is not his own, and gives it all to God, to Whom it really belongs. And this is what Christ our Redeemer wished us to understand in the holy Gospel, when He had healed those ten lepers, and one alone returned to thank Him for the benefit he had received. *Were not ten made clean?* He said, *and none hath returned and given glory to God but this stranger* (Luke xvii. 17-18). And, admonishing the children of Israel to be grateful and not forget the benefits received, God calls their attention to this point: *Take care and forget not God, when thou enterest in the land of promise upon much prosperous fortune of temporal goods, houses, inheritances, and flocks. Take care that Thy heart then be not lifted up, and thou become ungrateful and say that by thine own strength and management thou hast come in for this* (Deut. viii. 11, 14, 17). This is forgetting God, the greatest ingratitude possible, attributing to oneself God's gifts. Let not such a thing enter into your thought, but remember God, and recognize that strength is His, and He has given you ability for all; and that He has done it, not for any merits of yours, but in fulfilment of the promise that He freely made to those fathers of old. This is

the gratitude and thanksgiving and sacrifice of praise wherewith God our Lord claims to be honored for the benefits and favors that He does us. *The sacrifice of praise shall honor me* (Psalm xlix. 23). *To God alone, King of ages, immortal and invisible, be given the glory of all* (I Tim. i. 17).

From this there follows another great gain and advantage, which is that the really humble man, though he hold many gifts of God and be on that account much regarded and esteemed by all the world, nevertheless does not esteem himself or make more of himself on that account, but remains as fixed in his own lowliness as if none of the things that are said of him were found in him. For he knows well how to distinguish between what belongs to another and what is his own, and to assign to each what belongs to him; and thus considering the gifts and benefits which he has received from God, he regards them not as his own property, but as another's property lent to him, and keeps his eyes always fixed on the knowledge of his own weakness and misery, thinking what would become of him if God withdrew His hand and were not ever upholding and preserving him. Rather, the more gifts he has received from God, the more is he confounded and humbled on that account.

St. Dorotheus says that, when trees are well laden with fruit, that same fruit makes the branches bend and bow downwards, and sometimes even break under the great weight they have to carry; but when a branch has no fruit on it, it stands straight lifted up on high; and ears of corn, when the wheat is well grained, bow down so that you think the stalk would break; but when the ears stand straight up, it is a bad sign, indicating that they are empty. So, he says, it happens in the spiritual world that those who are empty and void of fruit walk with a haughty mien and strut, but they who are laden with fruit and gifts of God walk in great humility and self-abasement. From the



very gifts and benefits that they have received, the servants of God take occasion to humble and abase themselves and walk in greater fear.

St. Gregory says that, as with him who has received a large sum of money on loan, though he rejoices in the sum lent him, yet his joy in what he has got is much allayed by the knowledge that he is bound to pay it back and the care and anxiety of thinking how he shall meet his bond in due time; so with the humble man, the more gifts he has received, the more he recognizes himself to be in God's debt, and thereby the more bound to His service. He thinks he is not answering greater benefits with greater services, greater graces with greater thanksgivings, and believes and takes it for granted that anyone to whom God has given what He has given to him, would be a better man than he is, more grateful, and would have made a much better use of God's gifts. And thus one of the considerations that make the servants of God very humble and ashamed of themselves is this, that they know that God is sure to ask account of them not only of sins committed, but also of graces received— they know that *to whomsoever much is given, much shall be required of him; and to whom much is entrusted, of him they shall ask more*, as Christ our Redeemer says (Luke xii. 48). The Abbot Macarius says that the humble man regards the gifts of God as a depository or trustee, who holds property of his master, to whom no sentiment of vainglory occurs on that score, but rather fear and anxiety for the account that he knows they are sure to ask of him if by his fault the property is lost.

Hence also follows another good thing and advantage, that the truly humble man never despises anyone, nor slights him, however much he sees him fall into faults and sins; nor is he proud of himself at seeing such occurrences, nor takes himself for a better man than that other. Rather he takes occasion to humble himself more from seeing the other fall, considering that himself and the fallen

one are made of one clay, and that in the other's fall he falls so far as depends on him; since, as St. Augustine says, there is no sin that one man commits, which another man might not commit but for the hand of God lovingly holding him up. And so one of those ancient Fathers, when anyone had fallen, used to weep bitterly, saying, "Today for thee, and tomorrow for me." As he has fallen, so might I fall, since I am a weak man as he is; and that I have not so far fallen I owe to a particular favor of the Lord. The saints advise us, when we see a blind man, a deaf man, a cripple, a man who has lost a limb, or an invalid, we should take all these woes as marking favors done to us, and give thanks to God that he has not made me blind, nor deaf, nor maimed, nor dumb like that other. So we should reckon the sins of all men as marking favors done to us, because in all those cases I might have fallen if the Lord had not in His infinite mercy delivered me. Hereby the servants of God keep themselves in humility, and avoid disparaging their neighbors or being indignant with anyone, however many faults and sins they see in him, according to that saying of St. Gregory: "True righteousness makes us have compassion on our brother, false righteousness breeds disdain and indignation"—*Vera iustitia compassionem habet, falsa iustitia dedignationem*. Such proud people ought to fear what St. Paul says: *Rebuke him with mildness, lest it come about that thou also fall into temptation* (Gal. vi. 1). The Lord grant that they be not tempted in that same matter that they condemn, and come to prove to their cost how great is human weakness, that being the usual chastisement of this fault. In three things, said one of those ancient Fathers, did I judge my brethren, and I have fallen into all three myself—that we may know by experience that we also are men, and learn not to judge or despise anyone.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

*Of the Great Favors and Benefits That God Does to the  
Humble, and What Is the Reason Why He  
Exalts Them So Much*

**A**LL good things have come to me along with her (Wisdom vii. 11). These words Solomon says of the divine wisdom, that all good things have come along with her. But we may very well apply them to humility, and say that all good things come with her, since the same Wisdom says that *where there is humility, there is wisdom* (Prov. xi. 2). And elsewhere, that to keep this humility is *the height of wisdom* (Wisdom viii. 21). And the Prophet David, that *to the humble God giveth wisdom* (*sapientiam praestans parvulis*, Psalm xviii. 8). But apart from this, Holy Writ teaches us this truth as well in the Old as in the New Testament, promising great blessings and graces of God, now to the humble, now to the little ones, now to the poor of spirit, calling the truly humble by these and other such names. *Upon whom shall I look*, says God by Isaias (lxvi. 2), *and upon whom shall I cast mine eyes, but upon the humble and the poor, and him who trembles and is abashed before me?* (*nisi ad pauperculum et contritum corde et trementem sermones meos*). On such people does God cast His eyes, to do them favors and fill them with good things. The glorious Apostles St. Peter and St. James in their canonical epistles say: *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble* (I Pet. v. 5; James iv. 6). The most holy Queen of Angels teaches us the same in her Canticle: *He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away* (Luke i. 52-53). And this is what the prophet had said before: *Thou wilt save the humble folk, and wilt cast down the eyes of the proud* (Psalm xvii. 28). It is what Christ says to us

in the holy Gospel: *Everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke xiv. 11). As the waters run down to the valleys (Psalm ciii. 10), so the showers of God's graces go to the humble; and as the valleys, by the abundance of water that they gather in hollows, are usually fertile and yield good crops, so those who are lowly in God's eyes, that is, the humble, increase and yield much fruit by the many gifts and graces that they receive of God.

St. Augustine says that humility attracts to itself the Most High God: "God is high: if you humble yourself, He comes down to you; if you lift yourself up and are proud, He shuns you"—*Altus est Deus: humilias te, et descendit ad te: erigis te, et fugit a te*. Do you know why? he says. It is because God, the great and sovereign Lord, looks upon the humble, as the Royal Prophet says (Psalm cxxxvii. 6), and His looking upon them is to fill them with good things; but as for the proud, he says, He sees them from afar off; and as here when we see a thing afar off, we do not know it, so God does not know the proud to do them favors. *Verily I say to you, I know you not*, says God to the wicked and the proud (Matt. xxv. 12). St. Bonaventure says that, as soft wax is ready to receive in itself whatever impression one wishes to make on it, so the humble man disposes his soul to receive the virtues and gifts of God. In the feast that Joseph made for his brethren, the smallest received the greatest portion (Gen. xliii. 34).

But let us see what is the reason why God so exalts the humble and does them such great favors. The reason is because there nothing is lost; what is laid down all stays in the house. For the humble man is never elated at anything, never attributes anything to himself, but attributes and returns all entirely to God, and to Him gives the glory and honor of all. With these honest folk, says God, We can well deal; We can well trust in such hands Our property, and give them Our gifts and riches, because they will



not take them away from Us, nor exalt themselves thereupon. Thus God deals with them as with His own, because all the glory and honor remains His. So we see here on earth a king or great lord glories and takes for a display of his grandeur, to lift one, as they say, from the dust of the earth and deal with him who was nothing and had nothing; because thereby the liberality and greatness of the king comes out and is better seen, and they say then that So-and-So is of his making. So the Apostle says: *We hold the treasures of graces and gifts of God in earthen vessels* (II Cor. iv. 7), to give us to understand that these treasures are of God, and not of us, because earth and clay does not raise itself up.

It is for this reason, then, that God lifts up the humble and does them so many favors. And for this same reason He sends the proud empty away; because pride is self-confident, relying much on its own activities and contrivances, attributing much to itself, and taking vain satisfaction in the happy success of its enterprises as though it had done the business by its own strength and energies; all this is so much taking away from God, and appropriating that honor and glory which belongs to His Majesty. When we make a little way in prayer, with ever so little devotion and just one tiny tear, we fancy that we are spiritual folk and men of prayer. And even sometimes we set ourselves above others, thinking that they are not so advanced or not so spiritual, and are not getting forward at the rate that we are. This is why the Lord does not do us greater favors, and sometimes deprives us of what He had given, that we may not turn good into evil, health into sickness, medicine into poison, and gifts and benefits received into our greater condemnation by our bad use of them. To an invalid with a weak stomach, though the meat be good, let us say, chicken, they give only a little, because he has not strength to digest more; and if they gave him more, it would get corrupted and turned into bad humor. The oil of the Prophet

Eliseus never ceased to flow until there was a failure of vessels to receive it; they failing, Holy Scripture says the oil stopped at once (IV Kings iv. 6). Now that is the oil of divine mercy, which of itself is limitless; there is no limit to His graces and mercies. *The hand of the Lord is not shortened* (Isaias lix. 1). God has not narrowed nor drawn in His hand; He has not changed His nature, for God neither changes nor can change, but always remains in one condition and is more ready to give than we to receive. The fault lies with us, in that we have not empty vessels to receive the mercies and graces of God; we are too full of ourselves and trust too much in our own resources. Humility and self-knowledge loosen and detach a man from himself, making him resign all confidence in himself and in human means, and attribute to himself nothing, but all to God; and on such God bestows His favors in handfuls. *Humble thyself before God, and await his hands* (Ecclus. xiii. 9).

## CHAPTER XXXIX

*How Important It Is for Us to Betake Ourselves to Humility to Make Up Thereby for What Is Wanting to Us in Virtue and Perfection, and That God May Not Humble and Chastise Us*

THE blessed St. Bernard says: "Very foolish is he who puts his trust in anything but an attitude of humility, seeing, brethren, that we have all sinned and offended God in many ways, and thus we have no right but to be punished"—*Apud Deum ius habere non possumus, quia in multis offendimus omnes*. If man should wish to enter into judgment with God, says Job (ix. 3), he will not be able to answer him one thing for a thousand, nor for a thousand charges to plead one good acquittal. "What, then, remains, and what other remedy avails us," continues St. Bernard,

“than to betake ourselves to humility, and supply thereby what is wanting to us in all the rest?” And on account of the great value of this remedy, the saint repeats it again and again in these and like words: “What is wanting to you in point of a good conscience, supply it by shame: and what you lack of fervor and perfection, supply it by blushes”—*Quidquid minus est fervoris, humilitas suppleat purae confessionis*. St. Dorotheus says that Abbot John also greatly recommended this, and used to say: “Brethren, when through our weakness we cannot labor so much as we would, let us at least humble ourselves, and thereby I trust we shall find ourselves ranked in the number of those who have labored.” When after many sins you find yourself incapacitated by ill health from doing much penance, travel by this plain way of holy humility, for you will find no other more suitable means to your salvation. If it seems you cannot make head in meditation, make head in shame and confusion of yourself; and if it seems you have no talent for great things, go in for humility, and thereby you will make up the deficiency of all things else.

Let us consider, then, how little the Lord asks of us and with how little He is satisfied. He asks that we know and humble ourselves as befits our lowly estate. If God asked for great fasts, great penances, high contemplations, some might excuse themselves, saying that they have no strength for this one, nor talent nor capacity for the other; but there is no reason why anyone should excuse himself from being humble. You cannot say that you have not health or strength to be humble, or talent or capacity for that. St. Bernard says that nothing is easier for one who wishes than to humble himself. We can all do it, and we all have within ourselves matter enough for it. *Thy humiliation is in the midst of thee* (Mich. vi. 14). Let us, then, betake ourselves to humility, and recognize to our shame what is wanting to us of perfection, and in this way we may move the heart of God to mercy and pardon. Now that you are

poor, be humble, and with that you will satisfy God; but to be poor and proud offends Him greatly. Of three things that the Wise Man assigns as things that God much abhors, the first is *a man poor and proud* (Ecclus. xxv. 4). The like also offends men here on earth.

Further, let us humble ourselves that God may not humble us, a thing that He is wont to do very commonly. If, then, you wish that God may not humble you, humble yourself. This is a very important point and worthy of our very leisurely consideration and reflection. The blessed St. Gregory says: "Do you know how much God loves humility and how much He abhors pride and presumption? He abhors it so much that He permits us, to begin with, to fall into venial sins and many small faults, thereby to teach us that, as we cannot keep ourselves from small sins and temptations, but see ourselves stumbling and falling every day in things trifling and easy to overcome, we may be sure that we have not strength to avoid greater sins, and thus we may not become proud over these greater things, nor attribute anything to ourselves, but ever live in fear and humility, begging the Lord's grace and favor. The same says St. Bernard, and it is the common doctrine of the saints. St. Augustine on those words of St. John (i. 3), *and without him nothing was made*; and St. Jerome on that saying of the Prophet Joel: *I will give you back the years that the locust and the palmer worm, the mildew and the caterpillar have devoured* (Joel ii. 25), say that it was to humble man and tame his pride that God created these little animalculæ and small vile worms that are so troublesome to us. God could well have tamed and humbled that proud people of Pharaoh by sending them bears, lions, and snakes; but He chose to tame their pride with the vilest creatures, flies, gnats, and frogs, to humble them more.

Thus, then, that we may live in humility and confusion of face, God permits us to fall into trifling faults, and that



these little bits of temptations should sometimes make war upon us, these gnats, these petty affairs, that seem to have in them no body or bulk at all. If we stop to consider attentively what is apt to trouble and disturb us at times, we shall find that they are airy nothings, which, taken for what they are worth, have no body or substance whatever—some silly little word that they have said to us, or the tone in which they said it, or their failure, as we thought, to make enough account of us. Out of a fly skimming through the air one makes a windmill, and putting things together one comes to be very much disturbed and upset. How would it be if God sprang a tiger or a lion upon us, when a gnat is enough to make us so disturbed and restless? How would it be if there came a very severe temptation! Thus we must draw out of these things great humility and shame. And if you draw that, says St. Bernard, it is a mercy of God, and great benefit and bounty on His part, that little vexations do not fail to beset you, and that that is enough to make you humble.

But if these little things are not enough, understand that God will proceed further, to your heavy cost, as He is wont to do. God has such an abhorrence of pride and presumption and such a love for humility, that saints say that by a just and most secret judgment of His own He is apt to permit a man to fall into mortal sins as the price of his humiliation—and not into any sort of sins, but into sins of the flesh, which are the most frightful and foulest of all, for his greater humiliation. As they say, He chastises secret pride by manifest lust. They quote to this effect what St. Paul says of those proud philosophers, whom God for their pride gave over to the desires of their heart. They came to fall into sins of impurity most foul and unmentionable (Rom. i. 24, 26), God so permitting it for their pride, that they might be thoroughly confounded and humbled, seeing themselves turned into beasts, like Nabuchadonosor, with

the heart and conduct and behavior of beasts. *Who will not fear thee, O King of nations!* (Jerem. x. 7). Who will not tremble at this punishment so great that there is none greater outside of hell! And sin is even worse than hell. *Who knoweth, O Lord, the power of thine anger, and for fear can number thy wrath?* (Psalm lxxxix. 11).

The saints observe that God practises with us two sorts of mercy, one great and one small. It is a small mercy when He succors us in our small miseries, which are temporal miseries that touch only the body; and His great mercy, which succors us in our great miseries, which are spiritual and regard the soul. So when David saw himself in that great misery, forsaken and cast off by God for the adultery and murder that he had committed, he cries out in loud tones, begging of God great mercy: *Have pity upon me, O God, according to thy great mercy* (Psalm l. 3). So they say also that there is in God a great anger and a small anger. The small anger is when He chastises us here in the temporal order, with misfortunes and losses of property, honor, health, and other little things which touch only the body. But His great anger is when the chastisement reaches the interior of the soul, according to the words of Jeremy: *The sword hath pierced even to the heart* (Jerem. iv. 10). And this is what God says by the Prophet Zachary: *I am angry with great anger against the arrogant and proud nations* (i. 15). When God forsakes a man and lets him fall into mortal sins in punishment and chastisement for other sins, that is the great anger of God, these are the wounds of the divine fury, not of a Father, but of a just and rigorous Judge, of which may be understood that saying of Jeremy: *With the wound of an enemy I have struck thee, with a cruel castigation* (Jerem. xxx. 14). And so the Wise Man says: *A deep pit is the bad woman: he with whom God is angry shall fall into it* (Prov. xxii. 14).

Finally, pride is such an evil thing, and God abhors it so much, that the saints say that sometimes it is an advan-

tage to the proud man that God punishes him with this punishment, thereby to cure him of the pride that is in him. So says St. Augustine: "I make bold to say that it is useful and profitable for the proud that God should give them over to fall into some outward and manifest sin, that they may know themselves, and begin to humble themselves and lose confidence in themselves—they who for being well satisfied with themselves and wedded to their own ideas had already fallen by pride, although they did not feel it," according to the saying of the Wise Man: *Pride goeth before a fall, and before ruin the spirit is lifted up* (Prov. xvi. 18). St. Basil and St. Gregory say the same.

St. Gregory asks in reference to the sin of David, why God in dealing with those whom He has elected and predestined for life everlasting and exalted by His great gifts, permits them sometimes to fall into sin; yea, into fleshly and foul sins. And he answers that the reason of it is this, that sometimes those who have received great gifts fall into pride; this pride has taken such hold of the innermost regions of their heart that they themselves do not appreciate it, but, pleased with themselves and confident of themselves, they think it is of God. So it happened to the Apostle St. Peter, who did not think that it was pride that made him say those words: *Though all should be scandalized at thee, I will not be scandalized* (Matt. xxvi. 33). So, then, to cure them of all these fits of pride, so secret and disguised, into which they fall without knowing it, the Lord allows them to fall into such outward and manifest sins, so foul and shameful, because these sins are known better and more readily strike the eye; and by this means the man comes to be aware of the other malady which he had, the malady of secret pride all unbeknown to him, for which he would otherwise have sought no remedy, and so would have been lost; whereas by the manifest fall he comes to know it, humbles himself before God, and does penance both for the one sin and the other, and so finds remedy for both

ills. Thus we see in St. Peter that by the outward and manifest fall he came to know the hidden pride that had possessed him and to weep and do penance for both his sins, and so the fall did him good. The same happened to David, and so he says of himself: *It was a good thing that thou didst humble me, that I might learn thy just enactments* (Psalm cxviii. 71). Lord, it cost me dear, and I confess it; but it has been a good thing for me that I have been humbled, that I may learn how I ought to serve Thee henceforth, and how I ought to distrust myself. Thus, when a skilled physician is unable to cure a complaint altogether, and by reason of the humor's being malignant and obstinate he cannot dissipate and overcome it, he then makes it his aim to call and draw it out to the exterior parts of the body, the better to be able to deal with it. So the Lord, to heal certain haughty and rebellious souls, allows them to fall into grave exterior faults, to teach them to know themselves and to humble them; and by this outward breakdown the malignant and pestilent humor that was within is cured. These are God's great chastisements, the mere hearing of which makes the flesh creep. *Lo, I do a word in Israel such that whoever hears it, both his ears shall tingle* (I Kings iii. 11).

But, after all, since the Lord is so kind and merciful that He does not make use of this so rigorous punishment, this unhappy and lamentable expedient, without having used other and gentler means, He first sends us other occasions and other softer and gentler remedies to humble us. Sometimes it is sickness, sometimes contradiction and complaint, sometimes disgrace and loss of dignity. And when these temporal things do not suffice to make us humble, He passes on to spiritual things. First to little things, and after that permitting violent and strong temptations, going so far as to make us hang on a thread, and persuade us or make us doubt whether we consent, that thus the man may see and have clear experience that of himself he cannot overcome



them, and may know and understand by experience his weakness and the need he has of divine grace, and distrust his own powers and humble himself. And when all this is not enough, then comes that further treatment, so violent and costly, of letting the man be overcome by temptation and fall into mortal sin. Then comes, I say, the cautery, which they call the "fiery button" of hell, that now at least, being thus browbeaten [*quebrado los ojos*, knocked in the eye], the man may make a reckoning with himself what he really is and humble himself at last, since under the milder treatment he had no mind to do so.

Hereby we see how much it imports us to be humble and not trust in ourselves. Wherefore let everyone take account of himself and see how he profits by the occasions that God sends to humble him, acting as a most tender father and physician, to the end that there may be no need of those other remedies, so violent and so costly. Chastise me, O Lord, with the chastisement of a father; cure my pride with hardships, illnesses, insults and affronts, and by all the humiliations Thou shalt please, and permit me not to fall into mortal sin. Give leave, O Lord, to the devil to wound me in honor and in health, and make me like another Job; but give him not leave to touch my soul. Provided, O Lord, that Thou depart not from me, nor permit me to depart from Thee, any tribulation that may come upon me will do me no harm, but rather help me to gain the humility in which Thou dost take such pleasure.

## CHAPTER XL

### *In Which What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples*

**S**ULPICIUS SEVERUS relates, and Surius in the "Life of St. Severinus Abbot," the story of a holy man very distinguished for virtues and miracles, who healed the sick,

cast out devils from bodies, and did many other wonderful things, on which account all the world flocked to him, and there came to visit him titled noblemen and bishops, who thought it a happiness to touch his clothes and receive his blessing. On account of these things the holy man felt that there was beginning to enter into his head a certain vanity. And seeing on the one hand that he could not hinder the concourse of people, and on the other that he could not free himself from those importunate thoughts of vanity, he was much afflicted; and, putting himself one day in prayer, he asked our Lord with much earnestness for a remedy to this temptation, and that, in order that he might keep himself in humility, His Majesty would permit and give leave to the devil to enter into his body for some time and torment him like other possessed persons. God heard his prayer, and the devil entered into him; and it was matter of horror and wonderment to see that man, to whom a little time before they used to bring possessed persons for him to cure them, bound with chains like a madman and demoniac and taken accordingly to have exorcisms read over him, and all the rest that is usually done with such people. He was in this state for five months; and at the end of them, the story says, he was cured and free, not only from the devil who entered into his body, but from the pride and vanity that was entering into his soul.

Surius relates another similar example. He says that the holy Abbot Severinus had in his monastery three arrogant monks, bitter with pride and vanity. He had warned them thereof, and they were obstinate in their fault. The saint, in his desire to see them amended and humble, begged the Lord with tears to correct them and chastise them with some chastisement that would humble and amend them. And before he had risen from his prayer, the Lord permitted three devils to get possession of them and torment them violently, confessing with loud cries their pride and arrogance of heart. It was a chastisement proportioned

to their fault, that the spirit of pride should enter and dwell in subjects proud and full of vanity. And because the Lord saw that nothing else would humble them so much, they remained in that state for forty days, at the end of which the saint begged the Lord to deliver them from the power of the devil. He gained his petition, and they became sound in body and soul, and well humbled by this chastisement of the Lord.

Caesarius relates that they brought to a Cistercian convent a possessed person to be cured. The prior went out, and took with him a young religious of great reputation for virtue, whom he knew to be a virgin. The prior said to the devil: "If this monk bids you go out, will you dare to stay?" The devil answered: "I fear him not, because he is proud."

St. John Climacus relates that one time the wicked devils began to sow certain seeds of praises in the heart of a most valiant soldier of Christ, who was zealous for this virtue of humility. But he, moved by the inspiration of God, found that a very short cut for overcoming the notice of these perverse spirits was this: He wrote on the walls of his cell the names of some of the highest virtues—*Perfect Charity, Most Profound Humility, Angelic Chastity, Most Pure and High Prayer*, and the like; and when those evil thoughts began to tempt him, he would answer the devil: "Let us put the matter to the proof." Then he would read all those titles. "'Most Profound Humility.' I have not got it; we should be only too happy if it were *profound*; but I do not know that we have yet done with the first degree. 'Perfect Charity.' Charity, yes; but perfect? Mine is not very perfect, since I sometimes speak to my brothers in screaming and rough accents. 'Angelic Chastity.' No, I have many evil thoughts, and sometimes feel evil motions in my flesh. 'Most High Prayer.' No, I sleep and am much distracted over it." Then he would say to himself: "After you have gained all those virtues, you must still say

to yourself: 'I am a useless and unprofitable servant,' according to those words of Christ our Redeemer: *When ye have done all things that were commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants* (Luke xvii. 10)." What, then, must you be, you who are so far short of that perfection?



▣ TWELFTH TREATISE ▣

## ON TEMPTATION





## CHAPTER I

### *That Temptations Cannot Fail to Come in This Life*

**S**ON, entering on the service of God, stand in righteousness and fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation (Ecclus. ii. 1). St. Jerome on that text of Ecclesiastes, *A time of war, and a time of peace* (Eccles. iii. 8), says that the time of war is while we are in this world, and the time of peace will be when we pass out into the next. And hence our heavenly city takes its name of Jerusalem, which signifies *Vision of Peace*. "Let no one, therefore," he says, "fancy himself secure in time of war, where fighting is the word and apostolic weapons have to be wielded, if we wish to be victorious and rest in peace some day." St. Augustine on the words of St. Paul: *I do not the good that I would, but the evil that I would not, that I do: I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and leading me captive to the law of sin that is in my members* (Rom. vii. 19, 23), says that the life of the just man here is a conflict and not a triumph; hence we hear the notes of war sounded by the Apostle, marking the contradiction of his flesh and its great inclination to evil; but the note of triumph shall be heard afterwards, when this corruptible and mortal body shall have put on incorruption and immortality. And the note of triumph shall be: *O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?* (I Cor. xv. 55). Job puts it well in these words: *Man's life is a warfare upon earth, and his days as those of one who works for his daily hire* (Job vii. 1). For as it is the part of the day laborer to work and weary himself all day long, and then follows reward and repose, so also with us the day of this life is full of labors and temptations, and reward and rest will be given us according as we shall have labored.

Coming down in particular to examine the cause of this continual war, the Apostle St. James puts it: *Whence are wars and strifes in you? Is it not from this, from your lusts that war in your members?* (James iv. 1). We have in ourselves the cause and root, which is the rebellion and contradiction to all good which dwells in our flesh in consequence of sin; the earth of our flesh has been put under a curse, and thus brings forth thorns and thistles that prick and torment us continually. The saints bring in to this purpose the comparison of a ship which sets sail, and thereupon the sea grows angry and rises in a storm and high waves that threaten to engulf the vessel; so is our soul in this vessel of the body, leaky, full of holes, springing a leak here, while on the other side there arise waves and tempests of many disorderly movements and appetites, which threaten to drown and swallow it up. *The body that is corrupted weighs down the soul* (Wisdom ix. 15).

Thus the cause of our continual temptations is the corruption of our nature, that *fomes peccati*, or incentive to sin, and the evil inclination which remains with us in consequence of sin. Our greatest enemy dwells in our house, and it is he that makes upon us continual war. Thus there is nothing to amaze a man when he sees himself molested by temptations; for after all he is a child of Adam, conceived and born in sin, and he can never cease to have temptations, and evil inclinations and appetites making war upon him. Thus St. Jerome observes that in the Our Father Christ our Lord does not teach us to pray that we may have no temptations, for that is impossible, but that we may not fall under temptation. And elsewhere Christ said to His disciples: *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation* (Matt. xxvi. 41). Entering into temptation, says St. Jerome, is not being tempted, but being overcome by temptation: *in tentationem intrare non est tentari, sed vinci*. The holy patriarch Joseph was tempted to adultery, but was not overcome by the temptation. The chaste



Susanna was tempted in the same way, but by the aid of the Lord did not fall under the temptation. "You are mistaken, brother," says St. Jerome, writing to Heliodorus, "you are laboring under a great mistake, if you think that a Christian can ever go without persecution. Then are you most assailed, when you do not know that you are being assailed." *Our adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour* (I Pet. v. 8); and do you take yourself to be at peace? *He sitteth in ambush to kill the innocent, he sets his eyes upon the poor, he lies in wait for them like a lion in his den* (Psalm ix. 29-30); and do you fancy yourself secure? That is a delusion, for this life is a time of war and conflict. To be frightened at temptations is as if a soldier were to take fright at hearing a musket shot and want to get out of the war for that; or as if a sailor were to jump overboard because the ship rolls and pitches and turns his stomach.

St. Gregory says it is a delusion of some folk, when any grave temptation assails them, to think straightway that all is lost and that God has forgotten them and they are in His disgrace. A great delusion this; on the contrary you must understand that to be tempted is not only the ordinary lot of men, but is a thing that especially befalls men who are aiming at virtue and perfection. *All who would live piously in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*, says the Apostle (II Tim. iii. 12). Others often do not know what temptation is; they cannot see the rebellion and war which the flesh makes on the spirit; rather they take it for a dainty morsel. St. Augustine remarks this well on those words of St. Paul: *The flesh lusteth against the spirit* (Gal. v. 17). "It is in the good that the flesh lusteth against the spirit, for in the bad it has nothing to lust against; there only does it lust against the spirit where there is spirit." So the devil need not lose his time in tempting such people, for without any doing of his they of their own accord follow him and surrender themselves to him without difficulty

or contradiction. Hunters do not go a-hunting after cattle, but after stags and bucks, who run lightly and take to the hills. It is for those who are running with the lightness of stags to the height of perfection that the devil goes hunting with his nets and temptations; but as for those others who live like cattle, he has them already in his stall and has no need to hunt for them. "He is at no pains to assail those of whom he feels already that he is in undisturbed possession," says St. Gregory. And therefore we should not only not be dismayed at temptations, but rather take them for a good sign, as St. John Climacus observes. "There is no surer sign," he says, "that the devils are being beaten by us, than their assailing us most vigorously." They do it because you have revolted from them and gone out of their jurisdiction; therefore does the devil persecute you, because he envies you: otherwise he would not persecute you so much.

## CHAPTER II

### *How Some Are Tempted at the Beginning of Their Entry into Religion, or into the Church, Others Afterwards*

THE blessed St. Gregory observes that some begin to feel this war of temptations at the beginning of their entry into religion, when they first set to work at recollection and the pursuit of virtue. He quotes to this effect the example of Christ our Redeemer, Who wished to prefigure this condition of things and sketch it in outline in His own person by an admirable dispensation, since He did not allow the devil to tempt Him till after He had been baptized and had retired into the desert to fast and pray and do penance; then Holy Writ tells us that the devil came up to tempt Him. Hereby He designed, says St. Gregory, to warn those who were to be His members and His sons to be on the lookout for temptations when they proceed to recollect themselves and give themselves to virtue, because

it is quite the way of the devil to operate on those lines. When the children of Israel went out of Egypt, Pharaoh at once got together his army and all his power to go against them. Laban again, when Jacob went away from him, followed him with a great troop and burning indignation. And when the devil went out of that man mentioned in Holy Scripture (Luke xi. 26), it says that he took with him seven other spirits worse than himself to return into him, as if making a levy against a rebel and going out to subject him once more. So the devil, when anyone rebels against him and seeks to escape from his domination and subjection, is then more kindled to wrath and shows himself more fierce and seeks to make greater war. St. Gregory quotes to this purpose what the Evangelist St. Mark says, when Christ our Redeemer cast out that unclean deaf-and-dumb spirit: *With loud cries and much tearing of him he went out of him* (Mark ix. 25). The saint says: "Observe that, while the devil possessed the man, he did not tear him; and when by the divine power he was being compelled to go out of him, then he tore him;" that we might understand that the devil then tries to trouble and molest us with temptations when we are going away from him.

Apart from this, St. Gregory says that the Lord permits and wishes us to be tempted at the beginning of our religious life that no one may fancy that he is a saint for having left off his evil life and taken to a good one, thoughts which readily occur to people in that condition; and that the security of the good life that he has taken up may not make him negligent and slack. To that end God permits temptations to come upon him, to put before his eyes the danger he still is in, and rouse and waken him up to be diligent and careful. St. John Climacus says the novelty of a new life is wont to be irksome to him who has been accustomed to an evil life; and in the embrace of virtue there is manifested and felt the contradiction and war of vice fighting against the same, as the bird, trying to escape from the

snare, then feels that it is caught. Thus no one should be affrighted or dismayed at feeling difficulties and temptations at the beginning, since it is quite the ordinary thing.

St. Gregory adds that sometimes one who has left the world and an evil life and begun to serve God, has temptations such as he never felt before his conversion; this, however, he says is not because there was not in him before the root of those temptations which he had in him, but because it did not appear and show itself then, and now it shows itself. When a man is very much taken up with other thoughts and all sorts of cares, he often does not know himself nor take cognizance of what passes within him; but when he begins to recollect himself and enter into himself, then he comes to see the roots of evil that are germinating in his heart. It is, the saint says, like the thistle that grows on the road and does not come into view while all tread upon it who pass that way; still, though the pricks do not come out, the root remains covered up in the ground, and when passers-by cease to tread on them, they forthwith sprout and come out. So, he says, in worldly people the root of temptations often lies concealed and does not show itself externally, since, like that thistle on the road, it is trodden upon and crushed, as by wayfarers' feet, by the diversity of thoughts that come and go and by numerous cares and occupations. But when one goes apart from all that and recollects himself to serve God, then, as there is no one to tread on the thistle, there appears that which was hidden away there before, and the pricks of temptation springing from that evil root are felt. Thus a person's experiencing in religion temptations such as he never had before his entry is not because of his being a worse man now than when he was in the world, but because then the man did not see or know himself, and now he begins to see and know his evil inclinations and disorderly appetites; thus what he has to aim at is not the hiding or covering up of the root, but the rooting of it out.



Others there are, says St. Gregory, who at the beginning of their religious life are not assailed with temptations, but rather feel much peace, sweetnesses, and consolations; and afterwards, as time goes on, the Lord tries them with temptations: so His Divine Majesty has arranged, with divine knowledge and contrivance, that the path of virtue may not seem to them rough and difficult and they lose heart and go back again to what they had left a little before. Thus He acted with His people when He led them out of Egypt; He did not take them by the land of the Philistines, which was hard by, for the reason that Holy Writ gives, *lest perchance, seeing wars spring up against them, they might repent of having gone out of Egypt, and return thither again* (Exod. xiii. 17). But at the beginning God did them many favors, working great marvels and miracles on their behalf; but by the time that they had crossed the Red Sea and were in the desert, and could not go back, He proved them with many hardships and trials before their entry into the Land of Promise. So, says the saint, in dealing with those who leave the world, God rids them sometimes of wars and temptations at the outset, that, being yet tender in virtue, they may not get frightened thereby and return to the world. He takes them through pleasant places at the beginning and gives them consolations and sweetnesses, that, having tasted the delight and pleasantness of the way of God, they may better afterwards bear the war and molestation of temptations and hardships, all the more the more they have tasted of God and come to know how well He deserves to be served and loved. So with St. Peter, the Lord first showed him the beauty and splendor of His glory in the Transfiguration, and then permitted him to be tempted by the servant-maid's question, whether he was a disciple of Christ, that, humbled by temptation, weeping and loving, he might learn to strengthen and aid himself by the sight he had formerly seen on Mount Thabor; and as fear had overthrown him, so

the delight of the sweetness and goodness of God which he had experienced, might raise him up.

Hence, says St. Gregory, will be understood a mistake commonly made by those who are just entering on the service of God. Finding themselves sometimes in so much peace and quiet—the Lord doing them the favor of opening out to them the way of meditation—finding, too, the exercises of virtue and mortification easy, they fancy that they have attained perfection, not understanding that these are the sweetmeats of children and beginners, and that the Lord gives these gratuities to wean them from the things of the world. Sometimes, says the saint, God communicates Himself more abundantly to less perfect souls and souls that have not advanced so much in virtue, not because they deserve these consolations, but because they are in greater need of them. It is the way that an earthly father acts, who, while greatly loving all his sons, seems not to make account of those who are in health; but if any of them is ill, he not only provides medicines for his cure, but also things that make for comfort and ease. And as a gardener, while new plantations are tender, waters them frequently and with extra care, but once they are strong and have taken firm root, he leaves off this watering and extra care, so the Divine Goodness observes this method of management with weaklings and babes and beginners.

The saints also say that sometimes God gives more consolations to those who have sinned more, and seems to do them more particular kind turns and favors than to those who have always led a good life, that the former may not lose confidence and hope, and the latter may not grow proud. This is well set forth in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke xv. 23), and in the feasting, music, and rejoicing with which his father received him, killing the fatted calf and making a great banquet; whereas to the elder son, who had spent all his life serving him and had never transgressed his command, he had never given so

much as a kid to make merry with his friends; because *the healthy are in no need of a physician, but the sick*, as the same Lord says (Matt. ix. 12).

### CHAPTER III

#### *Why the Lord Wishes Us to Have Temptations, and of the Utility and Profit That Ensur Upon Them*

**T**HE Lord your God tempteth you, that it may be made manifest whether ye love him or not with your whole heart and your whole soul, says the Holy Spirit in Deuteronomy (xiii. 3). The blessed St. Augustine raises a question on those words. How, he says, does Holy Scripture say that God tempts us; and on the other hand the Apostle St. James says in his canonical epistle (i. 13): *God tempteth no man*? He answers that there are two ways of tempting. One is to deceive and make fall into sin, and in that way God tempts no man, only the devil, whose office it is so to do, according to what the Apostle St. Paul says: *Let it not be that the tempter hath tempted you* (I Thess. iii. 5); where the gloss says, "that is, the devil, whose office it is to tempt." Another way of tempting there is, to prove and gain experience of a person, and in this way it is that Holy Scripture says that God tempts and proves us. And in Genesis (xxii. 1) it is said: *God tempted and proved Abraham*. The Lord gives us a touch, and many touches, that we may know and understand that that is the measure of our love and fear of God. And so the same God said thereupon to Abraham, when he put his hand to the knife to sacrifice his son: *Now I know that thou fearest God* (Gen. xxii. 12); that is, as St. Augustine explains: "Now I have made thee know that thou fearest God." Thus, while there are some temptations sent us by the Lord from His own hand, there are others permitted to come upon us by means of our enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh.

But what is the reason why the Lord permits and wills that we should have temptations? St. Gregory, Cassian, and others treat this point very well. They say in the first place that it is profitable for us to be tempted and afflicted, and for the Lord to at times withdraw His hand a little way from us; were it not so, the prophet would not say to God: *Do not abandon me entirely* (Psalm cxviii. 8). But because he knew very well that the Lord is wont at times to leave His servants and withdraw His hand a little way from them for their greater good and profit, he does not ask God never to leave him, nor ever withdraw His hand from him, but never to abandon him entirely. And in the Twenty-Sixth Psalm he says: *Withdraw not in anger from thy servant*. He does not ask God never to withdraw from him at any time and in any way, but not to withdraw from him *in anger*, or forsake him so far as to let him come to fall into sin; but as for proving him and sending him temptations and trials, he rather asks for it. *Prove me, O Lord, and try me* (Psalm xxv. 2). And by Isaias the same Lord says: *A little, for an instant, I have forsaken thee, and in great mercies will I gather thee: in a moment of indignation I have hidden my face from thee, and in everlasting mercy have I had mercy on thee* (Isaias liv. 7-8).

But let us see in particular the benefits and advantages that accrue to us from temptations. Cassian says that God deals with us as He dealt with the children of Israel. He would not entirely destroy the enemies of His people, but left in the Land of Promise those enemies of His people, those tribes of Canaanites, Amorrheans, Jebusites, and so forth, to teach and exercise His people, that security might not make them fall into idleness, but they should be valiant men of war—*habere consuetudinem praeliandi* (Judges iii. 1). So, he says, the Lord wishes that we should have enemies and be assailed by temptations, that we should have practice in fighting and not take harm from idleness or prosperity; for oftentimes the devil deceives



and overthrows by a false sense of security those whom he has not been able to overcome by open fighting.

St. Gregory says that by a high and secret disposition of His providence the Lord wishes the good and the elect to be tempted and afflicted in this life; because this life is a road, or to speak better, an exile, whereby we journey and make our pilgrimage until we reach our heavenly country; and whereas some travelers, when they see on their way sundry meadows and woodlands, are apt to stop and turn off from the road, therefore the Lord has wished that this life should be full of trials and temptations, to prevent our setting our heart and love on it, or taking our land of exile for our country, and make us continually sigh for home. St. Augustine gives the same reason, and says that temptations and trials go to show us the misery of this life, that we may more ardently long for that life of heavenly bliss and seek after it with greater diligence and fervor. And in another place he says it is "that we may not love the stable"—*ne viator stabulum amet pro domo sua*—and forget those royal palaces for which we were created. When the nurse wishes to wean the child and teach it to eat bread, she puts aloes on her breasts; so God mingles bitterness with the things of this life to detach men from them and make them with all their heart and desire long after heaven. And St. Gregory: "The evils that beset and oppress us here make us have recourse and turn to God."

## CHAPTER IV

### *Of Other Benefits and Advantages That Temptations Bring with Them*

**B**LESSED is the man that suffereth temptation, and was well approved therein, because he shall receive the crown of life (James i. 12). On these words St. Bernard says: "Temptations needs must come; for *who shall be*

*crowned but he who hath lawfully fought?* (II Tim. ii. 5). And if there are no temptations, who shall fight, having no adversary to fight with?" All the benefits and advantages which Holy Writ and the saints tell us of in their sermons on trials and adversities, and they are innumerable—all these advantages temptations bring in their train. One of them, and a chief one of all, is that which the words above quoted say. The Lord sends us them that we may afterwards win a greater reward and crown in the glory of heaven, *since through many tribulations must we enter into the kingdom of God* (Acts xiv. 21). This is the royal road to heaven—temptations, tribulations, and adversities. And so in the Apocalypse one of those ancients, showing St. John the great glory of the saints, said to him: *These are they that are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb* (Apoc. vii. 14). By the way, St. Bernard asks, how does he say that they have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, seeing that blood is not apt to whiten but to color? They came out white, he says, because along with the blood from the side there issued forth also water, and that whitened them. Or if we do not say that, he says that they changed to white, because the blood of that tender and spotless Lamb was like a white and ruddy milk, according to the saying of the spouse in the Canticles: *My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen among a thousand* (Cant. v. 10).

Thus it is that through blood in tribulations entrance is gained into the kingdom of heaven. Stones here are hewn, cut, and finished off to get them to lie flat in their place in the temple of the heavenly Jerusalem, since there is neither hammer nor blow of hammer (III Kings vi. 7). And the better and more conspicuous the place where the stones are to be laid, the more do they pick and shape them. And as the stone over the doorway is usually most elaborately picked and finished off because the entrance is what most strikes the eye, so Christ our Lord, becoming the new gate

of heaven, which hitherto had been closed, would be most of all beaten with blows of the hammer—as also to the end that we sinners should feel ashamed to enter by a gate cut and shaped with so many tribulations and afflictions, without first suffering some blows ourselves, that we may be knocked into shape.

Stone that is to be thrown into the foundation is not usually cut stone; so those who are to be thrown below into the depth of hell have no need of being wrought and hammered. Let them make merry here in this life; let them gratify their whims and appetites; let them do their own will; let them give themselves up to good cheer, since with that they will be paid all their due. But they who are destined to go and repair the ruins of the evil angels and to fill those seats that they lost by their pride, must be hewn into shape by afflictions and temptations. St. Paul says: *If we are sons, we shall be heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, yet so that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him* (Rom. viii. 17). And the angel said to Toby: *Because thou wert acceptable to God, and He wished thee well, therefore he wished to try thee with temptation* (Tob. xii. 13), that so thy recompense and reward might be greater. And of Abraham, the Wise Man says that *God tried him and found him faithful* (Ecclus. xliv. 21); and because He found him faithful, constant, and brave under temptation, therefore He offered him reward and promised him under oath to multiply his generation like the stars in heaven and the sands on the seashore. It is for this, then, that the Lord sends us trials and temptations, to give us a greater reward and a richer crown. And so the saints say that God does us a greater favor in sending us temptations, giving us at the same time grace to overcome them, than if He were entirely to deliver us from them, because at that rate we should miss the reward and glory that we merit thereby.

St. Bonaventure adds to this another reason, that the Lord, loving us so much, is not satisfied with our gaining glory, and great glory, in heaven, but wishes us to gain it quickly, and not to have to detain us in purgatory; and therefore He sends us here afflictions and temptations, which are His hammer and forge whereby the rust and dross is cleared off our soul and it is cleansed and purified so as to be able to enter at once into enjoyment of God. *Take away the dross from the silver, and a most pure vessel will come forth* (Prov. xxv. 4). And this is no small favor and benefit, to say nothing of the gain that we make by commuting so great and severe a punishment as we should otherwise have to suffer there into the little or nothing, comparatively speaking, that we suffer in this life.

Moreover, Holy Scripture is full of the fact that the prosperities of this life separate the soul from God, whereas adversities and afflictions are the occasion of drawing her to God. What but prosperity made Pharaoh's cupbearer so quickly forget his interpreter Joseph (Gen. xl. 23)? What but prosperity made King Ozias proud, after such fair beginnings (II Chron. xxvi. 16)? What made Nabuchodonosor, or Solomon, or David vain enough to number the people? And when the children of Israel saw themselves in high power, thanks to the great favors and benefits that the Lord had done them, then they deteriorated and forgot God the more (Deut. xxxii. 15).

On the other hand, the prophet says that in trouble men return to God. *Cover, O Lord, their face with ignominy, and straightway they will seek thy protection* (Psalm lxxxii. 17). *They cried to the Lord in their affliction* (Psalm cvi. 13). *When the Lord sent them the pestilence, then they sought him and were converted to him, and rose early in the morning to meet him* (Psalm lxxvii. 34). When Nabuchodonosor was changed into a beast—whether it were in sober reality or in imagination—then he knew God (Dan. iv. 31). What a much better man David was under the



persecution of Saul, Absalom, and Semei than in his walk in the public place and covered way! So afterwards, like one who has been well under the knife, he says: *We have rejoiced for the days in which thou didst humble us, for the years in which we suffered hardships* (Psalm lxxxix. 15). *It is good for me that thou didst humble me* (Psalm cxviii. 71). Oh, what a good thing it has been for me, O Lord, to have been humbled and afflicted! How many have been cured by this treatment who otherwise would have perished! When the thorn of tribulation and temptation pricks, then one enters into oneself, is converted, and returns to God (Psalm xxxi. 4). Even in the world they say that the fool is made a wise man by punishment. And it is the pronouncement of the Holy Ghost by Isaias (xxviii. 19): *It is only suffering that openeth the eyes of understanding*. And more clearly by the Wise Man: *A severe illness maketh the soul sober* (Ecclus. xxxi. 2). Severe illness, afflictions, and adversities bring a man to reason. A man is living in prosperity free and unbroken, like a young bull that is to be tamed—*quasi iuvenculus indomitus* (Jerem. xxxi. 18); God flings over him the yoke of tribulation and temptation to quieten him down. The angel cured Toby with the gall of the fish (Tob. xi. 13), and with clay Christ gave sight to the blind (John ix. 6). For this, then, the Lord sends us temptations, which count among the number of really great trials and are most sensibly felt by spiritual men. As for those other material trials, such as losses of property, illnesses, and the like, for the servants of God, who are bent upon spiritual things, they are a very light matter, falling well outside their concern; for all that sort of thing only touches the body, and so they do not take much account of it. But when the trouble is interior and reaches the soul, as temptation does, which goes to separate them from God and seems to put them in danger and risk of losing Him, that is a thing they feel much, and makes them cry out with a cry as loud as that of the Apostle St. Paul when he

felt this war and contradiction of the flesh, seeking to drag the spirit away with it: Woe is me, that evil carries me away with it; and the good I fain would do, I do not succeed in putting into execution! Who will deliver me from this captivity and servitude! (Rom. vii. 24).

## CHAPTER V

*That Temptations Avail Us Greatly to Know and Humble Ourselves, and Have More Recourse to God*

TEMPTATIONS are further fraught with another great benefit and advantage; they make us know ourselves. "We often do not know what we can do, but temptation shows us what we are," says that holy man (Å Kempis). This knowledge of ourselves is the foundation stone of the whole spiritual edifice. Without it nothing durable can be built; and with it the soul rises like foam, because she knows how to take her stand on God, in Whom she can do all things. Now temptations lay open to man his weakness and ignorance, whereas up to then his eyes were closed both to the one and the other, and so he was unable to think poorly of himself, because he had not had this experience. But when a man sees that a breath of wind knocks him over, that at a mere nothing he stops benumbed, that when a temptation comes upon him he is disconcerted and gets into a heat, and counsel and good sense at once desert him and darkness envelops him—he begins then to moderate his high presumptions and to humble and think meanly of himself. If we had no temptations, we should thereupon have considerable conceit of ourselves and fancy ourselves very valiant; but when temptation comes, and man sees himself on the point of falling and apparently within the thickness of a penny-piece of plunging into the abyss, then he knows his weakness and humbles himself. Therefore St. Paul says (II Cor. xii. 7): "That the fact of

my having been caught up to the third heaven, and the great revelations that I had had, might not move me to pride, the Lord permitted me to be tempted, that I might know what I was of my own self and humble myself accordingly."

Hence follows another great benefit and advantage, which is that, as a man knows his weakness, he comes thereby to know the need that he has of the favor and help of the Lord, and of having recourse to Him in prayer, and ever clinging to Him as to his remedy and refuge, according to that saying of the prophet: *Oh, how good it is for me to draw nigh to the Lord, and never go far from him—mihi adhaerere Deo bonum est*—(Psalm lxxii. 28). And as a mother, when she wishes her boy to come to her, gets other people to frighten him, that he may be under the necessity of going to her lap, so the Lord permits the devil to alarm and frighten us with his temptations, that we may have recourse to His lap and protection; or, as Gerson says, *to provoke us as the eagle provokes her young to fly* (Deut. xxxii. 11); or as a mother lets go of her child for a short interval that he may call on her more earnestly, seek her more diligently, embrace her more closely, and she in her turn may fondle him more affectionately—*quo instantius ille clamet, accuratius quaerat, arctius stringat, et illa vicissim blandiatur suavius*. St. Bernard says that the Lord at times loosens His hold on the soul that she may cry out to Him with more longing and fervor and hold fast to Him more strongly. So He did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, pretending that He wished to go further forward, that they might importune and detain him. *Stay with us, since the evening is coming on, and the day is waning* (Luke xxiv. 29).

Thence it comes also that a man sets more store by the favor and protection of the Lord, seeing the need that he has of it. St. Gregory says that on this account it is expedient for us that the Lord should withdraw His hand just

a little from us, since if we always alike enjoyed His protection, we should not esteem it so much or take it to be so necessary; but when God leaves us a little to ourselves and we think we are going to fall, and then see that He gives us His hand at once—*If the Lord had not come to my aid, my soul had almost dwelt in hell* (Psalm xciii. 17)—then we set a high value on His favor, and become more grateful, and recognize better His goodness and mercy. *In whatever day I call on thee, I at once know that thou art my God* (Psalm lv. 10). One cries to God in temptation, and feels His aid and experiences the faithfulness of His Majesty in the good protection that He affords in time of need. So one recognizes Him for Father and Defender, and is inflamed more with His love and breaks out into His praises, as the children of Israel did when the Egyptians went in pursuit of them, and they beheld themselves on the far side of the sea, and the enemy drowned (Exod. xv. 1). Hence also it comes that one does not attribute any good thing to oneself, but attributes all to God and gives Him the glory of all, which is another great benefit and advantage arising out of temptations, and a great remedy against them, as also a means of gaining great favors and rewards from the Lord.

## CHAPTER VI

*That in Temptations the Just Are Further Proved and Purified, and Take Root Better in Virtue*

THE saints further say that the Lord would have us tempted to prove our virtue. As in winds and tempests it appears whether a tree is well rooted, and as the valor and strength of a knight and good soldier is not brought to light in time of peace, but in time of war, in encounters and conflicts, so the virtue and strength of a servant of God is not evidenced in time of devotion and comfort, but under



temptations and trials. On the words: *I am ready and not afraid to keep thy commandments* (Psalm cxviii. 60), St. Ambrose says that, as he is the better pilot and worthy of greater praise who has the knowledge and skill to steer a ship in time of tempests and squalls, when the ship seems now to be going to the bottom and now to be lifted up by the waves sky-high, rather than one who can steer and guide it in time of calm and fine weather; so he deserves greater praise who is able to steer and guide himself in time of temptations, in such way that neither does prosperity lift him up to pride, nor adversity and trial frighten and dismay him. Therefore does God send temptations, as He dealt with the people of Israel, allowing hostile tribes to dwell around them, *that in them he might make trial of Israel, whether they would hear the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses* (Judges iii. 4). And the Apostle Paul says: *Divisions must needs arise, that they who are approved may be made manifest among you* (I Cor. xi. 19). *God hath tried them and found them worthy of himself* (Wisdom iii. 5). Temptations are the strokes whereby God discovers the fineness of the metal; they are the touchstones whereby He tests His friends; thereby He comes to see what stuff each one is made of. And as men on earth like to have trusty and tried friends, so also does God, and therefore He proves them.

*As vessels are proved in the furnace, says the Wise Man, and silver and gold in the fire, so are the just proved in temptation* (Ecclus. xxvii. 6). St. Jerome says: When a mass of metal is burning in the fire, it does not show itself whether it is gold, or silver, or any other metal, since it is then all of one color and seems all fire; so in time of consolation, while fervor and devotion last, all has the look of fire, and the nature of the individual does not appear: but draw the mass out of the fire, let it cool, and you will see what it is. Let that fervor and consolation pass; let trial and temptation come; and then the stuff that each individ-

ual is made of will come to light. When in time of peace a man takes the way of virtue, one does not know whether that is virtue, or whether it springs from a good natural disposition or some particular relish that he has for the exercise and the absence of rival attractions; but when he perseveres under the assaults of temptation, it shows well that he does things on the motive of virtue and love of God.

Temptation also serves to purify a man more. As the goldsmith purifies silver and gold by fire and rids it of all its dross, so the Lord wishes to purify His elect by temptation, that they may be more agreeable to His Divine Majesty (Psalm lxx. 10). *I will burn them as silver is burned, and prove them as gold is proved*, says the Lord by Zachary (xiii. 9). And by Isaias: *I will clear thee of thy dross in the crucible, and take away all thy tin* (i. 25). This is the work of temptation in the just; it consumes and destroys in them the scum of vices and love of worldly things and of themselves, and makes them more ardent and purified. It is true, says St. Augustine, that not all gather this fruit from temptations, but good people only. Some things, put in the fire, at once soften and melt away, like wax; other things harden, like clay. So good people, in the fire of temptation and trial, are softened, knowing and humbling themselves; but the wicked are hardened and made more obstinate. Thus we see that of the two thieves on the cross, one was converted, while the other blasphemed. So St. Augustine says that temptation is a fire, in which gold comes out brighter, and straw is consumed; the just is made purer and more perfect, and the wicked more utterly lost. It is a storm, in which the just weathers it out and the wicked is drowned (Exod. xiv. 20-28). The children of Israel found their way through the waters, which served them as a wall to the right and the left, while the Egyptians sank and were drowned in the same waters.

St. Cyprian brings this reason to encourage us in tribulations and persecutions and persuade us not to fear them;

because Holy Writ teaches us that God's servants rather increase and multiply thereby, as it tells us of the children of Israel, that the more they were oppressed and harassed by the Egyptians, the more they increased and multiplied (Exod. i. 12). And of Noah's ark it is said that the waters of the deluge rose in flood and lifted the ark above the mountains of Armenia (Gen. vii. 17) ; so the waters of tribulations and afflictions lift up and greatly perfect a soul. If you are not purified by temptation, it will be because you are not gold, but straw, and so remain black and foul. Gerson says that, as the sea by its storms and tempests casts out of itself the impurities that it has gathered, and remains clear and purified, so the spiritual sea of our soul is cleansed and purified by temptations from the impurities and imperfections that it is apt to gather from an unwholesome peace and tranquillity, and to that purpose God sends them. Again, as a good husbandman prunes his vine that it may bear more fruit, so the saints say God our Lord, Who likens Himself in the Gospel to a husbandman, prunes His vines, that is, His elect, that they may fructify more. *Every branch that beareth fruit in me, he will prune it that it may bear more fruit* (John xv. 2).

What has been said is further confirmed by this, that the effect of temptation is to make the contrary virtue strike deeper root in the soul. The holy Abbot Nilus says: "As frosts and storms make shrubs and trees take deeper root in the soil, so do temptations make the contrary virtues take deeper root in the soul"—*Plantas enutriunt venti et tentatio confirmat animae fortitudinem*. *Virtue is made perfect in temptation [in infirmitate]*, that is, is established, solidly grounded, and made steadfast (II Cor. xii. 9). When a disputant assails a truth and you defend it, the more reasons and arguments he brings to assail it, the more reasons you find to establish and confirm it. So with the servant of God—the more temptations the devil brings up in opposition to virtue, the more motives and reasons God's servant

finds to preserve it and resist the temptation; then, too, he makes new resolutions and practises more acts of the virtue in question, which thus takes root and is strengthened and grows the more. Thus it is very well said that temptation acts on the soul like blows on the anvil, which harden it more and make it more solid and strong.

Besides this, which is the ordinary course of things, St. Bonaventure says that God our Lord is wont to bestow extraordinary consolations and rewards on those who are much tempted to any vice and show themselves faithful in temptation, by bestowing on them in an eminent degree the contrary virtue. Thus St. Gregory relates of St. Benedict how manfully he resisted a strong temptation of the flesh by throwing himself naked among brambles and thorns; wherefore the Lord gave him such perfection of chastity that thenceforth he never more experienced any impure temptations. We read the same of St. Thomas Aquinas, how with a blazing brand he put to flight a woman who came to solicit him; God thereupon sent angels who girded tight his loins as a sign that He bestowed upon him the gift of perpetual chastity. In the same way St. Bonaventure says of those who are tempted against faith, or with temptations to blasphemy, that the Lord is wont to give them afterwards great clearness and strong light of faith and a burning love of God, and the same with other temptations. He quotes to this effect that text of Isaias (xiv. 2): *They shall capture and subdue those who sought to capture and subdue them.* That is a thing that gives great comfort in temptations. Take comfort and animate yourself to fight, my brother, for the Lord wishes the contrary virtue hereby to strike deep roots in your soul; He wishes to bestow on you an angelic chastity. A lion came out to meet Samson, and he met it and slew it, and afterwards he found in it a honeycomb (Judges xiv. 6, 8). So does temptation look like a lion at the outset: but do not be afraid of it; meet it and overcome it; and you will see



how afterwards you find therein very great sweetness and pleasure.

Hence also it will be understood how on the contrary, when one lets himself be carried away by temptation and yields to it, the bad habit will grow by the doing of the acts that belong to it, and therewith the temptation will also grow and be stronger in future because the vice will have taken deeper root and got more mastery over the man. So St. Augustine observes. *Jerusalem hath sinned a great sin, therefore hath she become unstable*, says the Prophet Jeremy (Lam. i. 8), weaker and more apt to fall again; as the Wise Man also says: *The sinner will add sin to sin* (Ecclus. iii. 29). This is a very important warning for those who are assailed with temptations. The devil with such people is wont to deceive and blind them, getting them to believe that the temptation will cease by their gratifying it. A very great delusion! Rather, if you comply with the temptation, it will strike deeper root, and the passion and appetite will grow upon you, and henceforth will have greater force and more mastery over you; it will come back to overthrow you more easily time after time. They say well that this is like the case of dropsy; the more the dropsical man drinks, the thirstier he grows; or of the miser—the more he gets, the greater does his covetousness become. So in this case take it for an understood thing that, when you let temptation carry you away and yield to it, it will grow as many degrees as you yield, and you will lose so many degrees of strength. And when you resist and show fight, not yielding to it, virtue and strength grow in you to a proportionate degree. Thus the means to gain the victory over temptations and evil inclinations, and attain peace and quiet, is never to give in to them or let them have their own way. In this fashion, little by little, with the help of the Lord, the temptation and passion gradually loses strength until it ceases to give any trouble at all. This should greatly encourage us to resist temptations.

## CHAPTER VII

*That Temptations Make a Man Diligent and Fervent*

TEMPTATIONS carry with them also another considerable benefit and advantage, that they make a man diligent and careful, fervent and spiritual, as being always on the verge of a fight. As a long peace makes men slack, careless, and up to doing very little, so war and practice in arms makes them strong, robust, and valiant. For this reason Cato in the Roman senate gave this as his opinion: "It is well for the Romans that Carthage should stand intact, lest idleness draw them into other and greater evils. Woe to Rome when Carthage shall be no more!" The Lacedemonians gave the same answer when their king proposed to destroy and level to the ground a city that had given them much trouble at every stage of their history. The governors and senators declared that they would never consent to the breaking of the whetstone on which the strength and valor of the Lacedemonian youth was sharpened to a keen edge. They gave the name of "whetstone" to a city that had often made them take up arms, for thereby their youth were exercised in arms, and displayed the mettle and valor of each; and they reckoned it a great injury to their state to have no more wars and conquests. Thus having no temptations is apt to make men remiss and careless. A religious is going about with folded arms: nothing can induce him to take the discipline or wear a haircloth; he yawns at meditation, is slack in obedience, wanders about seeking conversation. There comes upon him a violent temptation, in which God and God's aid are necessary; thereupon he pulls himself together, and conceives spirit and fervor for mortification and meditation. Even in the world they say: "If you want to know how to pray, go to sea." Necessity and danger teach people to pray and have recourse to God in earnest. So St. Chrysos-

tom says that on this account God permits temptations for our good and spiritual profit. "When He sees that we are falling into tepidity, withdrawing from His conversation and intimacy and making little account of spiritual things, He lets us go a little from His hand, that, being thus chastised, we may return to His Majesty with more seriousness and care." And elsewhere: "When the devil assails us and goes about to frighten us with his temptations, that makes for our advancement, since then we get to know what we are and have more diligent recourse to God." Thus temptations are not only no obstacle or hindrance to our traveling in the way of virtue, but are even a means to help us thereto. So the Apostle St. Paul called temptation, not a knife or lance, but a prick and goad. The goad does not kill nor injure, but awakens and arouses, and makes one go the way more vigorously; so temptation does not injure, but does much good, since it arouses and awakens people to go their way better. This is apt to prove generally beneficial to all, even to the most advanced. However good and strong a horse may be, the spur is needful, and he runs better when he feels it; so God's servants run better and more nimbly in the service of God when they feel these pricks and goads of temptations, and then they become more humble and cautious.

St. Gregory says: "The aim of the devil in temptation is evil, but that of the Lord is good." The leech, when it sucks the blood of the patient, has no other purpose but to glut itself and would suck it all away if it could; but the purpose of the physician is to draw off the bad blood and give health to the sick man. When they apply the cautery called the "fiery button" to a patient, all that the fire wants is to burn, but all that the surgeon wants is to heal; the fire would like to reach the healthy part, but the surgeon applies it only to that which is diseased and will not let it go further. Thus the aim of the devil in temptation is to ruin our virtue and merit and glory; but the Lord's aim is

otherwise, and He marvelously works the exact contrary effect by the same means. Thus the stones that the devil hurls against us to break our heads and kill us, He takes to work out from them a most fair and precious crown for us, as we read of the glorious St. Stephen, who was surrounded by persecutors and overwhelmed by the stones that they threw at him, and saw the heavens opened, and Jesus Christ as it were gathering up those stones, to make of them for him a jeweled crown of glory.

Gerson adds another point that is very consoling, which he says is the common doctrine of doctors and saints. It is that, though one under the molestation of temptations commits some faults, and thinks that he has been guilty of some negligence and carelessness, and there has been some venial sin mixed up in the matter; nevertheless, on the other hand, the patience that he keeps under this affliction, and his conformity with the will of God, and the resistance that he makes, fighting against the temptation, and the expedients and means that he applies to gain the victory, not only remove and clear away all these faults and negligences, but make in him a growth and progress in merit of greater grace and greater glory, according to the saying of the Apostle: *God draws good from the temptation—faciet cum tentatione proventum* [ἐκβασις, a way out] (I Cor. x. 13), and makes us thrive and gain advantage thereby. A nurse or mother, in order that her child may learn to walk, leaves it a little to itself and then calls it. The child trembles and dares not go; she lets it alone, even though it falls sometimes, holding that for a less evil than its not learning to walk: thus does God deal with us. *I am as a nursing mother to Ephraim* (Osee xi. 3). God reckons nothing of these falls and faults that you think you commit, in comparison with the advantage that follows from temptations. Blossius relates of the holy virgin Gertrude that she afflicted and scolded herself much for a small defect that she had, and desired and begged God to deliver her



from it altogether. And the Lord replied very gently and sweetly: "Why wishest thou Me to be deprived of great honor, and thyself of great reward? For every time that thou dost recognize this defect or any other like it, and purposest to avoid it in future, thou gainest a great reward; and every time that anyone endeavors to overcome his defects for My love, he honoreth Me as much as a soldier would honor his king by fighting manfully in war against his enemies and trying to overcome them."

### CHAPTER VIII

*That the Saints and Servants of God Not Only Do Not Grow Sorrowful over Their Temptations, but Rather Rejoice for the Profit They Make Thereby*

**C**OUNT it all joy, brethren, when ye fall into temptations, says St. James (i. 2). And St. Paul: Yea, we even glory in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience probation, and probation hope (Rom. v. 3-4). In this manner St. Gregory explains the saying of Job: *If I sleep, I will say, when shall I rise? and again I will hope for the evening* (Job vii. 4). By the evening that Job hoped for St. Gregory understands temptation, and he notes that Job desired it as something good and profitable; for it is of good and prosperous events that we say we hope for them, and of ill and hurtful events, that we fear them. But because holy Job regarded temptation as a thing suited to him, and good and profitable, therefore he says that he hoped for it.

St. Dorotheus alleges to this purpose a story, related in the "Spiritual Meadow," of a disciple of one of the ancient Fathers who was much assailed by the spirit of fornication, and by favor of the Lord's grace he resisted manfully his evil and filthy thoughts; and to mortify himself he fasted, spent much time in prayer, and ill treated his body

by the labor of his hands. When his holy master saw him in such distress, he said to him: "If you like, my son, I will ask the Lord to deliver you from this combat." To that the disciple replied: "I see well, father, that it is a great affliction that I suffer; but nevertheless I feel that by reason of this temptation I profit more, because I have more recourse to God by prayer, mortification, and penance: and so what I beg of you is to ask God to give me patience and fortitude to suffer this affliction and to come out victorious, clean, and without reproach." The old man was delighted to hear this answer, and said: "Now I understand, son, that you are advancing in the way of perfection." When one is assailed by some vice and manages to resist manfully, then he walks in humility, solicitude, and anxiety, and by these afflictions and trials, little by little, his soul is cleansed and purified till it arrives at great purity and perfection. Of another holy monk St. Dorotheus relates that, when God delivered him from a temptation that he had, he was sad, and weeping said lovingly to God: "Lord, so I was not worthy to suffer and be afflicted and endure some tribulation for love of Thee." St. John Climacus relates of St. Ephrem that, coming to a very high state of peace and tranquillity—to what they call the earthly heaven and impassibility—he begged of God to put him back and renew the ancient battles of his temptations, that he might not lose the occasion and material for meriting and working out his crown. Of another holy monk Palladius relates that he came one day to the Abbot Pastor and said: "God has delivered me from my conflicts and given me peace, because so I besought Him." Pastor said: "Return to God and ask him that your conflicts may return, that you may not grow negligent." He had recourse to the Lord, saying what Pastor had told him. God answered that he was right, and his temptations came back. We see even that the Apostle St. Paul was not heard when he begged to be delivered from his temptation; he was told (II

Cor. xii. 9) : *Sufficit tibi gratia mea, nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur*—"My grace is sufficient for thee, for virtue is perfected and brought to light in temptation."

## CHAPTER IX

### *That in Temptations One Learns Lessons Not for Oneself Only, but for Others*

**T**HERE is another great advantage in temptations, and one very important for those whose business it is to aid their neighbor; it is that under temptation a soul is taught lessons not for herself only but for the benefit of others, experiencing in herself what she has afterwards to see in those whom she has to guide and direct. Under temptation the soul is exercised in the spiritual warfare, and by attentively considering the comings and goings of the Evil One, she thereby learns the lore of a spiritual master to guide souls, for experience teaches much. Hence the proverb: "No better surgeon than the man who himself has been well knived." As intercourse with the world makes men wide-awake, practical, and experienced, so do temptations. *They that sail the sea can tell the perils thereof* (Ecclus. xliii. 26). *But he who hath never been tried, what doth he know?* (Ecclus. xxxiv. 9). He will know nothing either for himself or for others. *The man who hath had experience in many things, will be a man of many resources; but he who hath not had experience deviseth little* (Ecclus. xxxiv. 9-10). He who has been well inured to these spiritual wars will make a good pastor. That, then, is another reason why the Lord wishes us to go through temptation, that we may have dexterity as masters of spirit to guide. To carry on this thought further, the Lord wishes us also to be tempted, that, when we see our brother come to us in temptation and affliction, we may have the sense to compassionate him. It holds in the spiritual as in the corporal order that one who

has had many infirmities and attacks of illness will be the man to compassionate and receive with charity and love those who are in the like distress.

Cassian tells of a young monk, very pious, but much vexed with impure temptations. He went to another monk, an old man, and told him plainly all about these temptations and bad motions which he suffered, thinking to find consolation and remedy from his prayers and counsels. But it turned out just the other way. The old man—who was old in years only, and utterly wanting in prudence and discretion—on hearing of the temptations of this youth, got horrified and began to bless himself, and gave him a rough handling, scolded him in harsh words, called him a miserable wretch, and said that he was unworthy of the name of a monk for having such things passing through his mind. In the end he sent him away, so disconsolate with his rebukes that the poor monk, instead of coming out cured, came out more sorely stricken, in great sadness, discouragement, and despair. And now he had no thought nor concern for any remedy to his temptation but to put the matter into execution, so much so that he took the road leading to the town with this determination and intent. The Abbot Apollo, one of the holiest and most experienced of the Fathers who lived in those parts, happened to meet him, and at sight saw from his appearance and mien that he was under some grave temptation; so he began with great gentleness to ask him how he felt and what was the reason of the disturbance and sadness that he showed. The youth was so lost in his own thoughts, so absorbed in his imaginations, that he answered never a word. The old man, seeing that his sadness and perturbation of mind was so great as not to allow him to speak, and make him seek to hide the cause thereof, importuned him very lovingly and gently to tell him of it. At last, overcome by his importunities, the young man told him outright that he could not go on being a monk nor resist the temptations and motions



of the flesh, according as the old man had told him, and that he had determined to leave the monastery, return to the world, and marry. Then the holy Abbot Apollo began to console and encourage him, saying that he too had those temptations every day; and that he must not be alarmed or give up on that account, for these things are not so much overcome and turned down by our own efforts as by the grace and mercy of God. Finally he begged him to stop for at least one day and return to his cell, and there beg of God light and remedy for his need. As the term asked for was so short, he gained his point with him; and, that gained, the Abbot Apollo went off to the hermitage or cell of the old man who had scolded the youth. When he came near, he put himself in prayer, and kneeling on his knees, and lifting up his hands with tears in his eyes, he began his prayer to God: "Lord, Who knowest the strength and weakness of each, and art the tender physician of souls, pass on the temptation of this youth to that old man, that he may learn at least in his old age to have compassion on the weaknesses and troubles of the young." Scarcely had he finished his prayer, when he saw a hideous little negro shooting a fiery arrow at the cell of that old man, wounded with which the old man came forthwith out of his cell, and went like one distracted, coming out of the entrance and going back again; at length, not being able to keep quiet or find rest in his cell, he took the road which the youth was taking to the town. The Abbot Apollo, who was standing looking on, and who by what he had seen understood his temptation, went up to him and asked him: "Where are you going, and what cause or temptation is it that makes you forget the gravity proper to your age, and walk with such haste and precipitation?" The other, confounded and ashamed by his bad conscience, understood that his temptation was known, and found no words to answer. Then the holy abbot took his hand and began to read him a lesson. "Go back," he said, "to your cell, and understand that up till now either the

devil did not know of you, or reckoned nothing of you, seeing that he did not assail you as he is wont to assail those whom he envies. By this you will know the smallness of your stock of virtue, that at the end of so many years that you have been a monk you have not been able to resist a temptation, nor even to endure it and stand out against it so much as one single day, but at the very outset you were overcome and were already going off to put the thing in execution. Know that for this the Lord has permitted this temptation to reach you, that at least in your old age you might know how to have compassion on the infirmities and temptations of others, and learn by experience to send them away consoled and encouraged, not in despair, as you did this young man who came to you. Doubtless the devil assailed him with these temptations, while he left you to yourself, because he had more envy of his virtue and progress than of yours, and thought that so strong a virtue must be countered by strong and violent temptations. Learn, then, from this in your future life to know how to compassionate others, and lend a hand to him who is going to fall, and help and lift him up with soft and loving words, instead of helping him to a fall by rough and disagreeable speeches, according to that word of Isaias: *God hath given me prudence and discretion, that I may know how to encourage and hold him up who has fallen* (Isaias l. 4), and according to the example of Christ our Savior, of Whom the same Isaias says, quoted by the Evangelist St. Matthew: *The bruised reed he shall not finally break, and the smoking flax he shall not finally extinguish* (Isaias xlii. 3).” The holy man concluded by saying: “And since none can appease or check the movements and excitements of the flesh otherwise than by the favor and grace of the Lord, let us offer prayer to God that He may deliver thee from this temptation; for it is He Who wounds and He Who heals, He Who humbles and exalts, He Who does to death and quickens.” The holy man set himself to prayer, and as at his

prayer the temptation came, so also at the same the Lord took it away at once. Thus hereby both the youth and the old man got their cure and their lesson together.

## CHAPTER X

*Here Begins the Enumeration of Remedies against Temptations, and First on the Part of the Mind, the Strength and Cheerfulness Which We Should Keep in Dealing with Them*

**F**OR the rest, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put ye on the armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the snares of the devil (Eph. vi. 10-11). The blessed St. Anthony, a man well versed and experienced in these spiritual wars and battles, used to say that one of the principal means to overcome our enemy is to show courage, strength, and cheerfulness in temptations, because thereby the enemy is at once put out and discouraged and loses all hope of being able to hurt us. Our Father, in his Book of Spiritual Exercises, sets down an excellent rule and instruction to this effect. He says that the devil our enemy behaves with us in temptations like a woman quarreling with a man; if she sees that the man stands out and shows fight, she at once subsides, turns her back, and flies; but if she has an inkling of pusillanimity and cowardice in the man, she thereupon plucks up and conceives greater boldness and daring, and turns into a tiger. So when the devil tempts us, if we show fight and spirit and withstand his temptations manfully, he thereupon loses heart and gives himself up for beaten; but if he notices in us signs of pusillanimity and discouragement, he then gathers greater spirit and strength, and turns into a lion and tiger against us. So the Apostle St. James says: *Resist the devil and he will fly from you* (James iv. 7). St. Gregory confirms this by that Scripture saying in

the Book of Job (iv. 11), where according to the Septuagint the devil is called *mirmicoleon*, that is, lion and ant. He is the lion of ants, but if you show him the strength of a lion, he will be an ant to you. For this reason the saints advise us not to be sad under temptation, but carry on the fight cheerfully, as Holy Scripture tells us of Judas Maccabaeus and his brethren and companions: *They fought the battles of Israel with great joy* (I Macc. iii. 2) ; and so they won.

And there is another reason for this; it is that, as the devils are so envious of our good, our cheerfulness is a torment and pain to them, and our sadness and pusillanimity gladdens them. Thus, if it were only for that reason, we should endeavor to make no show of pusillanimity and sadness, and not give them that satisfaction, but show great courage and cheerfulness to make them rage the more. The ecclesiastical histories tell of the holy martyrs, that one of the things that made their executioners rage, and whereby they tormented their executioners more than their executioners tormented them, was the courage and fortitude which they showed in their torments. In this way, then, we should behave towards the devils in our temptations, to make them rage and be angry. On account of this being such a main means to overcome temptations and gain the victory and triumph over our enemies, we will go on in the following chapters to mention some things that will aid us to maintain this courage and fortitude in them.

## CHAPTER XI

### *How Little It Is That the Devil Can Do against Us*

IT will help us not a little towards keeping up our courage and fortitude in temptations, to consider the weakness of our enemies and how little the devil can do against us, since he cannot make us fall into any sin if we do not want to. St. Bernard says very well: "Look and observe,



my brethren, how weak our enemy is, since he can only overcome him who wishes to be overcome—*non vincit nisi volentem.*” If a soldier going to war and to fight against the enemy knew for certain that if he only willed it he would be victorious and that victory was in his hand, what satisfaction would he conceive, being certain of victory, as he is certain that he wishes to win and not be beaten. In this way, then, it is open to us to wage our warfare with the devil, we being certain that he cannot overcome us if we ourselves do not wish to be overcome. St. Jerome remarks this very well on those words that the devil spoke to Christ our Redeemer, when he set Him on the pinnacle of the Temple and tempted Him, urging Him to throw Himself down from thence. St. Jerome says: “This is the voice of the devil, who desires that all should throw themselves down and fall into the abyss. The devil can urge you to throw yourself down, but he cannot throw you down if you do not wish it”—*Persuadere potest, praecipitare non potest.* “Throw yourself down,” says the fiend when he tempts you; “throw yourself into hell.” Say to him: “You throw yourself down—you know the way; I have no mind for the plunge.” If, then, you have no mind for it, he cannot throw you down; if you have no mind to go to hell, he cannot take you there. There was once a man walking in much affliction, quite prostrate and worn out with a temptation of the devil inwardly saying to him, “Hang yourself.” He opened his grief to a religious, who said to him: “Brother, must not that be by your will? Say then to him, ‘I will not,’ and come and tell me next week how things go.” Thereby he got rid of the temptation, and came back to thank the confessor who had given him that remedy. This, then, is the means that we are now prescribing.

This agrees well with what St. Augustine says: “My brethren, before the coming of Christ the devil went about loose; but when He came into the world, He tied up the devil, who had played the strong man therein (Matt. xii.

29).” So St. John said in the Apocalypse: *I saw an angel coming down from heaven, who held the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand; and he seized the dragon, the old serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up there, and sealed up the door upon him, that he might no more deceive the nations, until the thousand years should be accomplished; and after that he must be untied for a little while* (Apoc. xx. 1-3). St. Augustine says on this passage that tying up the devil means not letting him do all the evil that he could and would, if let, in the way of tempting and deceiving men in a thousand subtle ways. When Antichrist comes, they will give him somewhat more liberty, but at present he is tied up fast. But you will say: “If he is tied up, how does he succeed in doing so much mischief?” “It is true,” says St. Augustine, “that he succeeds in doing much mischief, but that is among the careless and negligent; for the devil is tied up like a dog in chains, and cannot bite anyone except him who chooses to go up to him. He can bark and provoke and solicit to evil; but he cannot bite or do evil except to one who chooses to approach him”—*Latrare potest; sollicitare potest; mordere omnino non potest nisi volentem*. Now as he would be a fool, and you would laugh at and make game of the man, who let himself be bitten by a dog strongly made fast on a chain, so, says St. Augustine, they deserve to be laughed at and derided who let themselves be bitten and overcome by the devil, since he is tied and chained up tight like a mad dog, and can do no mischief except to those who choose to come near him. If you are bitten, you have brought it on yourself, since you have gone up to him for him to bite you. Seeing that he cannot get at you, nor make you fall into any fault unless you choose, so you may well make game of him. St. Augustine explains to this effect that verse of the psalm: *That dragon that thou hast created, Lord, for us to make game of him*

(Psalm ciii. 26). Have you not seen how they make game of a dog or of a bear that is tied up, and how boys make of him a sport and pastime? So, then, you may make game of the devil when he brings up against you his temptations, and call him dog, and say to him: "Get away, you wretch; you are tied up; you cannot bite, nor do any more than bark."

When the devils appeared to the blessed St. Anthony in various horrible shapes of wild beasts—lions, tigers, bulls, serpents, and scorpions, surrounding him and threatening him with their claws and teeth, roaring and hissing dreadfully as though they would swallow him up—the saint made game of them and said to them: "If you had any power, any one of you would be a match for one man; but because you are weak, you arrange to come in a great rabble to frighten me with that. If the Lord has given you any power over me, here I am, eat me up; but if you have none, why labor in vain?" So we should do; for since God has become man, the devil has no power, as he himself confessed to St. Anthony, who answered him: "Thanks be to God for that, for though you are the father of lies, in this you speak the truth." For Christ Himself tells us: *Have courage and confidence, for I have come and delivered the world from the dominion and power of the devil—confidite, ego vici mundum* (John xvi. 33). Infinite thanks be given to God, who has given us this victory through Christ (I Cor. xv. 57).

## CHAPTER XII

*That We Should Draw Great Courage and Confidence for  
Struggling with Temptations from the Consideration  
That God Is Looking at Us*

IT will help us also much towards keeping up great courage and strength in temptations and struggling manfully against them, to consider that God is looking at us. When a good soldier is in the field fighting against the enemy, and comes to see that the emperor or commander in chief is looking on and enjoying the sight of the courage with which he fights, he gathers great strength and spirit for the struggle. Now this is the case in our spiritual combats, in sober earnestness and truth. When we are fighting against temptations, we must make account that we are in a theater, surrounded and encompassed by angels and all the heavenly court, they looking on, awaiting the success; and that the president and judge of our struggling and fighting is Almighty God. This is the reflection made by the saints, founded on those words of the holy Gospel: *Lo, the angels came and ministered to him* (Matt. iv. 11). In that temptation and spiritual combat of Christ with the devil, the angels were looking on; and when the victory was complete, they began to minister to Him and sing the praise of the victory.

We read of the blessed St. Anthony that on one occasion he was grievously beaten and kicked by the devils, when, lifting up his eyes, he saw the roof of his cell open, and a ray of light stream in, so wonderful that at its presence all the devils fled and the pain of his wounds left him; and with heartfelt sighs he said to the Savior, Who then appeared to him: "Where wert Thou, good Jesus, where wert Thou, when I was so mauled by the enemy? Why wert not Thou here at the beginning of the attack, to stop it or to heal all my wounds?" To whom the Lord answered and



said: "Anthony, I was there from the beginning, but I was looking to see how thou behavedst in the fight; and because thou didst combat manfully, I will always aid thee and make thy name great all over the round of the earth." Thus we are a spectacle to God and the angels and to the whole heavenly court. Who, then, will not pluck up heart to fight vigorously and valiantly before such a theater?

And besides, since God's eyes being upon us means God's help given us, we should go on further to consider that not only is God looking upon us as Judge, to give us reward and recompense if we are victorious, but also as Father and Patron, to favor and aid us that we may come out victors. *The eyes of the Lord range all over the earth, and give strength to all who hope in him* (II Chron. xvi. 9). *He is ever at my right hand that I may not slip* (Psalm xv. 8). In the Fourth Book of Kings Holy Scripture recounts how the king of Syria sent the whole strength of his army with chariots and horsemen to march upon the city of Dothain, where the Prophet Eliseus lived, to take him; and his servant Gieri, rising in the morning and seeing such a multitude upon him, was terrified and cried aloud to Eliseus, telling him of what was going on. *Oh, dear, my lord, what shall we do?* (vi. 15). He thought his master and he were lost men. The prophet said to him: *Fear not, for there are more with us than with them.* And he begged God to open the man's eyes to see. He opened his eyes, and he saw the whole mountain covered with horsemen and chariots of fire in their defense, at which he was much comforted. With this we also should be comforted. *Put me, O Lord, by thy side, and let any man's hand who willeth fight against me* (Job xvii. 3), said holy Job. And the Prophet Jeremy: *The Lord is with me, and like a strong man of war fighteth for me: I have nothing to fear from my enemies, because without doubt they shall fall and be confounded* (xx. 11). St. Jerome, on that saying of the prophet: *Lord, thou hast crowned us as with the buckler of thy good will* (Psalm v.

13): says: "Observe that there in the world a buckler is one thing, and a crown is another; but with God they are as one thing because the Lord, in defending us with the buckler of His good will, sends us His protection and aid; this His buckler and protection is our crown and victory." *If God be with us, who shall be against us?* (Rom. viii. 31).

### CHAPTER XIII

#### *Of Two Excellent Reasons for Fighting with Great Courage and Confidence under Temptation*

**T**HE blessed St. Basil says that the rage and enmity which the devil bears against us is not only envy of man, but hatred which he bears against God our Lord. And since he cannot face God in might, nor gratify his raging ill will upon Him, but sees that man has been created in the image and likeness of God, he turns all his rage and ill will upon man, for being the image and likeness of the God Whom he so much abhors; and seeks to avenge himself upon him, doing him all the harm he can—as though one were angry with the king, and vented all his rage on his images, because he could not get at the king himself; or as the bull, says St. Basil, seeing himself wounded by a man with a spear, makes for the man's statue and figure, which they have put in the bull ring, and discharges on it his fury and rage, tearing it to pieces, wreaking his vengeance on that instead of the man.

Hence the saints draw excellent reasons to encourage us to struggle manfully under temptation and have great confidence that we shall come victoriously out of it. The first is, because the question therein is not of our honor alone, but of that of God, Whom the devil tries to injure and offend in us. This should animate us to sacrifice our lives rather than fail, that the devil may not carry his point of having wreaked some vengeance on God in our persons, as

being His images, which He so much loves and sets such store by. Thus we are not only defending our own side, but standing to arms for the side and cause of God, and so we ought to die, if called upon, rather than consent to any infringement of the cause of God.

The second reason is this. Since it is in regard of God, and out of the hatred which he bears to His Divine Majesty, that the devil makes war upon us, we may confidently expect that the Lord will come forward in defense of His own cause, make the affair His own, and stand to arms on our behalf, that we be not beaten nor brought under the power of the devil, but come out victorious and triumphant. We see here on earth that, if a prince or powerful lord sees anyone put to any hard task or situation of difficulty in his cause and on his account, he comes forward at once as the need requires and takes the affair for his own. Holy Scripture tells us in the Book of Esther that because of Mardochee, Aman was on the point of putting to death the whole people of the Jews, and Mardochee turned the tables on him to such good effect, that he put Aman and his where Aman fain would have put them. Much more will the Lord do this. Thus we may boldly say to God: *Arise, O Lord, and defend thy own cause: take up arms and buckler, and rise to my aid* (Psalm lxxiii. 22; xxxiv. 2).

#### CHAPTER XIV

*That God Permits No One to Be Tempted beyond His Strength, and That We Must Not Be Discouraged at the Temptation Growing or Continuing*

**B**UT God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted beyond what ye can bear, but will make even with temptation issue, that ye may may be able to endure it (I Cor. x. 13), says the Apostle St. Paul. And if the

temptation increases, there will also increase succor and support to overcome and triumph over your enemies and get the better of the temptation. This is a very consoling truth, and one to give us great courage under temptation. We know on the one hand that the devil can do no more than God gives him leave to do, nor tempt us one point beyond that; on the other hand we are certain that God will not give him leave to tempt us beyond what we can stand, as the Apostle here says. Who will not gather comfort and courage from this? There is no doctor who measures and weighs out the ounces of aloes to be given to a patient with so much care as the Heavenly Physician measures and weighs out the aloes of temptation and tribulation that He is to give or permit to His servants according to the virtue and strength of each. The holy Abbot Ephrem says very well: "If the potter, who makes vessels of clay and puts them in the oven, knows well the proper time to keep them on the fire that they may come out well hardened and fit, and serviceable for man's use—he does not keep them longer than is necessary, that they may not get overheated and break; nor again less time than is necessary, that they may not come out so soft as to go to pieces at once when taken in hand—much more will God act in this way towards us, seeing that He is infinite wisdom and goodness, and great is the fatherly love that He bears us."

St. Ambrose on that text of St. Matthew: *Jesus went into a boat, and His disciples followed him; and presently there arose on the sea such a violent storm that the waves washed over the boat, but he was asleep* (Matt. viii. 23-24), says: Observe that even the Lord's elect, and associates living in His company, are assailed with temptations; and He sometimes plays the part of one asleep, hiding like a good father the love that He bears His children, that they may have more earnest recourse to Him; but God does not sleep, nor has He forgotten you. The Prophet Habacuc says: *If ye think that the Lord is slow a-coming, hope in him, and be*



*sure that he will come and not be late* (ii. 3). He seems to you to linger, but in fact and reality He does not linger. The sick man thinks that the night is long, and the day is slow in coming. But it is not so; the day is not behindhand, but will come in due time. Thus God is not behind His time, though to a sick man like you it looks as though He were. He knows well the occasion and situation, and will be at hand in time of need.

St. Augustine applies to this subject the answer of Christ our Redeemer to the sisters of Lazarus, Martha and Mary: *This sickness is not unto death, but to the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby* (John xi. 4). Thus, he says, God often deals with His servants; He leaves them for some time in temptations and tribulations, so that He seems to have forgotten them; but He has not forgotten, but does this to draw them out afterwards more triumphant and glorious. So He did to Joseph, whom He left a long time in prison, afterwards to draw him out thence, as He did draw him out, in great honor and glory, making him governor of all Egypt. So you must understand the Lord holds back, and permits the temptation and tribulation to last, to draw you out from it to your greater profit and improvement afterwards. St. Chrysostom also observes this on the words: *Thou liftest me up from the gates of death* (Psalm ix. 15). The prophet, he remarks, did not say, "Thou delivered me, O Lord, from the gates of death," but "Thou liftest me up," because the Lord not only delivers His servants from temptations, but goes further, making their virtue more excellent and signal. And therefore, however hard pressed you see yourself, though you seem to be driven close up to the gates of hell, you must have confidence that God will draw you out safe from thence. *'Tis he that doth to death and giveth life; letteth come nigh to the gates of death, and draweth out and delivereth therefrom* (I Kings ii. 6), when you thought that this time you were a lost man. And so says holy Job: *Though*

*he kill me, still will I hope in him* (xiii. 15). St. Jerome makes a good reflection on what befell the Prophet Jonah when he thought that he was a lost man and there was no means of saving him, but they were throwing him to drown in the sea. The Lord had there a whale ready to receive him, not to devour but to save him and carry him to land as in a well-appointed vessel. Observe and consider, says St. Jerome, how what men thought was his death was his preservation and life. So, then, he says, it happens to us, that many times what we take to be our ruin is our gain, and what we take for death is life.

As with the glass flask in the hands of a juggler, who repeatedly throws it into the air so that bystanders think each time that it must fall and break to pieces; but after he has done that three or four times, fear departs from the lookers-on, and they take the juggler to be so clever that they admire his dexterity; so the servants of God, who know well what a clever performer God is—and have practical experience that He knows well how to play with us, lifting us up and bringing us down, doing us to death and quickening us to life, striking and healing us—have now no fear in adversities and dangers though they take themselves to be frail as glass, because they know they are in good hands and that the flask will not break nor be allowed to fall. *My lot, O Lord, is in thy hands* (Psalm xxx. 16).

In the Ecclesiastical History there is related a saying of the Abbot Isidore: "For forty years I have been assailed by a vice, and have never consented to it." And of many other of those holy old monks we read like instances of temptations continual and vehement, that they fought with great courage and confidence. *There were giants, versed in war* (Baruch. iii. 26). And those giants, who knew well how to fight, we have to imitate. The glorious St. Cyprian, to encourage us thereto, quotes the saying of Isaias (xliii. 1-2): *Fear not, says God, because I have redeemed thee: thou art mine, and I know thee well by name: when thou passest*

*through the waters, I will be with thee, and thou shalt not drown; when thou walkest in the midst of the fire, thou shalt not burn, and the flame shall do thee no hurt, because I am thy God, thy Lord and Savior.* To the same effect are those very tender and comforting words which God speaks by the same prophet: *Ye shall be carried at my breasts, and on my knees ye shall sit and be fondled: as a mother fondles her little child, so I will comfort you* (Isaias lxvi. 12-13). See with what love and tenderness a mother takes up her child when in any fright it has recourse to her; how she embraces it and gives it suck; how she puts its face close to hers; how she caresses and fondles it. Now with incomparably greater love and tenderness does the Lord receive those who have recourse to Him in their temptations and dangers. This is what the prophet said consoled and encouraged him much in his temptations and labors. *Remember, O Lord, the word that thou hast given to thy servant, whereby thou hast given me hope. This hath strengthened and consoled me in the affliction of my labors, and thy word hath put life into me* (Psalm cxviii. 49-50). This should comfort and encourage us also under temptation, for God cannot fail to keep His word. *It is impossible for God to lie*, says the Apostle St. Paul (Heb. vi. 18).

## CHAPTER XV

*That to Distrust Ourselves, and Place Our Whole Confidence in God Is a Great Means to Overcome Temptations, and Why God So Readily Comes to the Help of Those Who Trust in Him*

WE see that the Lord Himself in many places of Holy Scripture assigns no other reason for protecting and delivering a man in time of temptation and tribulation beyond the fact of his having hoped and trusted in Him. *Because he hath hoped in me, I will deliver him* (Psalm

xc. 15). *Thou who savest them that hope in thee* (Psalm xxvi. 7). *He is the protector of all that hope in him* (Psalm xvii. 31). Hence the Church's collect: "O God, the protector of all that hope in Thee." And the psalmist puts this before God to oblige Him to show mercy: *Have mercy upon me, O God, have mercy upon me, because in thee my soul trusteth, and in the shadows of thy wings I will hope* (Psalm lvi. 2). And the Prophet Daniel does the same: *Because there is no disappointment for them that trust in thee* (Dan. iii. 40). And the Wise Man says: *Who hath ever hoped in the Lord and been disappointed?* (Ecclus. ii. 11). And all Scripture is full of this topic. We have spoken of it above at some length, and therefore need not dwell on it here.

But let us see why this means is so effectual for gaining the favor of the Lord, and why God so readily comes to the help of such as distrust themselves and put their whole confidence in Him. The reason of this we have already mentioned several times, and the Lord Himself assigns it in the psalm: *Because he hath hoped in me, I will deliver him: I will protect him because he hath known my name* (Psalm xc. 14). St. Bernard declares it: "Because the man attributes nothing to himself, but all to God, and gives Him the honor and glory of it all." Thereupon God steps in, and makes the business His own and charges Himself with it, and stands up for His own glory and honor. But when a man trusts in himself and in his own methods and contrivances—taking upon himself the whole conduct of the affair, and so taking it away from God—and seeks to exalt himself with the honor and glory that is due to the Divine Majesty, then God leaves him in his weakness, which is good for nothing. For, as the prophet says: *God hath no pleasure in them that trust in the strength of their horses* (Psalm cxlvi 10) and in their own methods and contrivances, but in them who distrust themselves and all the means they use of their own, and put their whole confidence in God; to



them He sends succor and bestows upon them His copious and abundant blessing.

St. Augustine says that this is the reason why God sometimes delays His gifts and favors and allows to remain in us for a long time the after-tastes of our vices and bad inclinations, "not for our damnation, but for our humiliation, enhancing in our eyes the value of His grace, lest, if we found everything easy, we should take that to be ours which is really His, an error clean contrary to religion and piety." If we got these things easily, we should not value them so much, and we should straightway think that we had them in our sleeve, the fruit of our own diligence. St. Gregory, on those words of Job: *Lo, there is no help for me in myself* (Job vi. 13), says: "Often we make such a bad use of virtue and the gifts of God that it would be better for us not to have them. Thus the possession of virtue becomes death to the soul; it prompts her to self-confidence; it stabs her with the sword of vain elation; it lifts her up to slay her, and drags her to destruction." That is why the Lord often refuses us His gifts, and permits us to have experience of our own impotence and to fail in many good works, great and small, being unable to do what we want. And He lets this impotence continue for a long time, that we may learn to humble ourselves and to cease to trust ourselves, and not attribute anything to ourselves, but attribute all good to God; and then we shall be able to sing and say: *The bow of the mighty is overcome, and the weak are girt with strength* (I Kings ii. 4).

## CHAPTER XVI

*Of Prayer as a Remedy: Some Ejaculatory Prayers  
Suitable for Time of Temptation*

PRAYER must always be much recommended as a means, for it is a most general remedy, and one of the chief remedies which Holy Writ and the saints give us; and Christ Himself teaches it in the holy Gospel: *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation* (Matt. xxvi. 41). And He taught us not only by word, but also by His own example that night of His Passion, preparing Himself for the conflict with a long and earnest prayer, not that He needed it Himself, but to teach us what to do in all our temptations and adversities. The Abbot John used to say that a religious should be like a man carrying in his left hand fire, and in his right hand water, that whenever the fire threatened to seize him, he might forthwith pour water on it and put it out. So, when the fire of an unclean and evil thought threatens to seize us, we should at once have at hand the cooling waters of prayer to put it out. He brings also another comparison, and says that a religious is like a man sitting under a large tree, who, seeing many serpents and wild beasts coming against him, unable to resist them, climbs up the tree and so saves himself. In like manner the religious, when he sees temptations coming, must mount up on high by prayer and have recourse to God, and so he will find salvation and deliverance from the temptations and snares of the devil. *In vain is the net cast in sight of winged creatures* (Prov. i. 17). The devil will labor in vain, casting his nets, if we know how to soar on high with the wings of prayer. *Mine eyes are ever on the Lord, because he will pluck my feet from the snare* (Psalm xxiv. 15).

We dilated on this in the First Volume; now we will gather some ejaculatory prayers, whereby we may avail ourselves at such times. Holy Scripture is full of them, especially the Psalms. Such are: *Lord, I suffer violence, answer for me* (Isaias xxxviii. 14). *Arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord, arise and do not abandon me forever. Why hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our need and tribulation?* (Psalm xliii. 23). *Take up thine arms and thy buckler, and arise in our defense: say to my soul, I am thy salvation* (Psalm xxxiv. 2). *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, how long wilt thou turn away thy face from me? How long shall mine enemy glory over me? Look upon me, Lord, and hear me, and enlighten mine eyes, that I may never sleep in death, nor ever mine enemy say, I have prevailed over him* (Psalm xii. 1-5). *Thou, Lord, art my refuge and defense in time of need and tribulation* (Psalm ix. 10). *My hope, O Lord, and my joy shall be to see myself under the shadow and shelter of thy wings* (Psalm lvi. 2; lxii. 8). St. Augustine took great delight in this reflection, and would say to God: "Lord, I am a fledgling, tender and weak; if Thou defendest me not, the kites will carry me off." *Keep me, O Lord, under the shadow of thy wings* (Psalm xvi. 8). There is special marvelous efficacy for this purpose in the beginning of the Sixty-Seventh Psalm, because, as we set up against them in our defense not our own strength, but the strength of God, distrusting ourselves and invoking the favor of His Divine Majesty, our enemies lose heart and fly, seeing that God is coming forward against them in our cause. St. Athanasius affirms that many servants of God have experienced much benefit in their temptations from the recital of this verse. Sometimes with these and the like words of Holy Scripture, which are especially efficacious, sometimes by words gushing out from our necessity and need—which also are very efficacious—we should always keep ready at hand this remedy of having recourse to God in prayer. So Father Master Avila was wont to say: "Temptation to you,

and you to God." *I will lift up mine eyes to the high mountains, whence all help and support is to come to me. My help is of the Lord, who made heaven and earth* (Psalm cxx. 1-2). And we should take care that these cries and sighs come forth, not merely from the lips, but from the innermost depths of the heart, according to that word of the prophet: *Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O Lord* (Psalm cxxix. 1). St. Chrysostom says on those words: "He did not speak nor cry merely with the lips, for the tongue can often speak when the heart is distracted—but from the deepest and innermost depths of his heart, with great fervor, he cried to God."

## CHAPTER XVII

### *Of Two Other Remedies against Temptations*

ST. BERNARD says that, when the devil wishes to capture a man, he first carefully studies his character, temperament, and inclination, and assails him by that to which he sees him most inclined. Those who are of a soft and sweet temperament he assails with temptations to impurity and vainglory; those of a rougher blend, with temptations of anger, pride, indignation, and impatience. St. Gregory says the same, and applies a good comparison. He says that, as one of the chief concerns of a bird-catcher is to know what sort of food the birds are fondest of whom he wishes to catch, to provide them with that; so the chief care of our adversaries the devils is to know what sort of things we best like, to provide us therewith and gain a hold on us thereby. Thus we see that the devil assailed and tempted Adam through his wife, because he knew the great affection that he bore her; and Samson also he assailed and overcame by the same, so that he came to discover the riddle and say wherein his strength lay. Thus the devil, like a skillful warrior, goes round and searches out with much



diligence the weakest part of our soul, and the passion that has the greatest sway in each individual and to which he is most inclined, to attack him by that. And this should be the precaution and remedy which we should take on our side against these tactics of the devil—to recognize the weakest side of our soul, the side most destitute of virtue, the side where natural inclination or passion or evil habit is most apt to carry us away, and put there greater care and defenses.

Another remedy, much in conformity with the above, is given us by the saints and masters of spiritual life. They say that we should make it a general rule, when we are assailed by any temptation, immediately to take to the contrary thereof, and defend ourselves by that. In this manner physicians cure the sickness of the body, contraries by contraries. When the sickness comes of cold, they apply hot applications; when of dryness, wet applications; and in this way the humors are reduced to a just mean and put in due proportion. In the same way we should cure and remedy the sicknesses and temptations of the soul. And this is what our Father says: "We should forestall temptations by their contraries; thus, when one is found to be prone to pride, he must be exercised in lowly duties which seem likely to help to humble him; and so of other evil propensities."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *Of Two Other Chief Remedies, Which Are to Resist Temptation in Its Beginnings, and Never to Be Idle*

OF resisting first beginnings St. Jerome says: "Slay your enemy while he is small, strangle him at the commencement, root him out before he grows, because afterwards you will not be able." Temptation is like a spark, which, if it once catches on, causes a conflagration. *Of one spark*

*cometh a great fire* (Ecclus. xi. 34). The poet says: "Resist beginnings; too late is the medicine made up when the mischief has gathered strength by long delay." And a much better authority advises the same, the Holy Ghost by the Prophet David: *Blessed is he who shall take and dash thy little ones against the rock* (Psalm cxxxvi. 9). And by his son Solomon: *Catch for us the little foxes that lay waste the vineyards* (Cant. ii. 15). When the little foxes of temptations are small, when thoughts are just beginning to arise of rash judgment, of pride, of misplaced affection, of particular friendship, then is the time to dash them against the solid rock, which is Christ and the consideration of His example, that they may not grow and so come to lay waste the vineyard of your soul. We cannot help temptations' and evil thoughts' coming upon us; but happy is he who knows how to get rid of them at the beginning, at their first appearance. So St. Jerome explains this passage. It is very important to resist the beginnings, when the enemy is weak and has but little strength; then resistance is easy, afterwards very difficult.

St. Chrysostom illustrates this by a comparison. When a sick man has a desire to eat something that will do him harm and he vanquishes the desire, he escapes the harm that that unwholesome dish would have done him and is healed of his sickness the sooner; but if for a small gratification of taste he partakes of that injurious dish, he aggravates his sickness, and may come to die of it or to suffer great pain in his cure, all which misfortune he might have escaped by taking a little pains to check at the beginning that gluttonous desire of eating that harmful food. So, when there comes upon a man a thought or desire of looking at some dangerous object, if he conquers himself at the beginning, restraining his eyes and rejecting at once the evil thought, he delivers himself from the molestation and pain of the temptation which otherwise would have arisen therefrom and from the harm which he might have incurred

by consenting to it. But if he does not conquer and restrain himself at the beginning, then for that little negligence or that little pleasure which he got by looking or thinking, he may come afterwards to die the death of his soul, or at least to have great difficulty and trouble in resisting. Thus what would have cost him little or nothing at the beginning, comes in the end to cost him dear. Hence the importance of resisting beginnings.

In the Lives of the Fathers it is related how the devil once appeared to St. Pacomius in the form of a very beautiful woman. The saint asked him why he practised such malicious craft to ensnare men. The devil said: "If you start giving some entry to our first little stirrings, at once we apply stronger incentives to provoke you to sin; but if we see that you resist at the outset and give no entry to the imaginations and thoughts which we bring up, we disappear like smoke."

It is also a great remedy against temptations never to be idle. Cassian says that the Fathers of Egypt took this for a first principle, and kept it as an ancient tradition received from their elders, and recommended it to their disciples for a singular good remedy. "Let the devil always find you busy." So God taught St. Anthony, and gave him this remedy to enable him to persevere in solitude and defend himself against temptations. St. Augustine quotes his case. He says that St. Anthony could not always be at prayer, though he was St. Anthony, and was assailed and harassed at times by various thoughts. He made his petition to God: "Lord, what shall I do? I would fain be good, and my thoughts will not let me." And he heard a voice that said to him: "Anthony, if thou desirest to please God, pray; and when thou canst not pray, labor with thy hands. Take care to be always busy with something; do what is in thy power, and the protection of the Lord shall not fail thee." Others say that there appeared to him an angel in the form of a youth, who dug a little and then went for a

little on his knees in prayer, his hands joined and lifted up, which was teaching the same lesson. Idleness is the root and origin of many temptations and many evils; and it is very important for us that the devil may never find us idle, but always busy.

## CHAPTER XIX

### *Of Temptations Which Come under the Appearance of Good, and that the Great Remedy for All Such Temptations Is to Recognize and Hold Them for What They Are*

ST. BONAVENTURE calls our attention to a matter of common knowledge, but quite necessary to insist upon. We are to observe that with good people, who aim at virtue and perfection, the devil makes his attacks on them under the appearance of good, transforming himself into an angel of light. Venom and poison, says St. Jerome, is not given except under the guise of sugar or some other tasty thing, that it may not be noticed; and the hunter hides the snare with the bait. So does the devil. *In the way in which I walked they set up a hidden snare* (Psalm cxli. 4). If the devil's attack were conducted openly and without disguise, they who love virtue and desire to serve God would fly from him, and he could do nothing with them. So, says St. Bernard, "the good man is never deceived except under the appearance of good"—*bonus nunquam nisi simulatione boni decipitur*. The devil is clever enough to know right well the way of entry into each soul: so, to compass his intention, he enters well disguised. At first, says St. Bonaventure, he proposes things good in themselves; then he mixes them up with what is evil; then he offers false goods, which are really evil; and when by this time he has the man in his snare, so that he can hardly get out of it, he then shows clearly his poison and makes



him fall into open sins. Like the scorpion, he has a winning head, and keeps his deadly poison in his tail.

How many, says St. Bonaventure, have struck up a conversation and friendship with sundry others under pretext of spirituality, thinking that what they said was of God and spiritual, and to the profit of their souls? And perhaps in the beginning it was so; but this is the artifice of the devil which we are now laying bare. We know well his artful tricks, his comings in and his goings out; *we are not ignorant of his plans* (II Cor. ii. 11). This is how he begins, first by good things, then follow long talks and conversations—and sometimes they are of God, at others of the great love that they mutually bear one another; then follows the interchange of knick-knacks and small presents for keepsakes and signs of love, which things, says St. Jerome, are a clear sign of a love that is not holy. The devil now goes on to mix evil with good, and thence follow false goods and real evils. In this way the devil deceives many in this and in many other vices, covering them with a veil of virtue, that their real nature may not be known—like him who pretends to be a friend to another to gain access to him, and thereby afterwards treacherously to murder him, as Joab did to Amasa (II Kings xx. 9), and Judas to Christ our Redeemer, delivering Him up and selling Him with a kiss of peace (Luke xxii. 48).

Thus we must greatly beware of these temptations that come under the appearance of good, and be very much on our guard, for they are all the more dangerous inasmuch as they are less easily recognized. Therefore the prophet begged the Lord to deliver him from *the noonday devil* (Psalm xc. 6). The devil is not content with transforming himself into an angel of light, as St. Paul says (II Cor. xi. 14), but transforms himself into an angel of noonday light, making gloom and darkness look resplendently bright, and getting us to think that there is no room for doubt nor any danger, but that that is clearly good which is certainly evil

and of its own nature highly dangerous. There are sundry thieves who go about dressed in silks, so that none could know them nor have an idea that such criminal purpose could have place in those who appear such honorable men, until they are caught with the stolen goods in their hands. Then people are shocked to find out that these were thieves, and say, "Who would have thought it?" Such is the temptation that comes under the appearance of good.

It is the common doctrine of the saints and masters of the spiritual life that the great remedy against all these temptations is to recognize that it is a temptation that is assailing me, as it is enough to recognize one for an enemy to be on one's guard against him. And that is why we said above that self-knowledge is a most efficacious means for overcoming all temptations. The force of this means may be seen by this. If, when the temptation and the evil motion and desire came on, you saw before you a horrible and frightful devil persuading you thereto, what would you do? At once you would make the sign of the cross and call upon the name of Jesus; you would not need to see any more than that it is the devil who is persuading you to do this, to understand that it is a delusion and temptation, and to fly from it. Now this is literally what takes place in our temptations. We have all of us our Angel Guardian, according to those words of Christ: *See that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels ever see the face of my Father who is in heaven* (Matt. xviii. 10). On which words St. Jerome says: "Great is the dignity of souls, and great the value that God sets on them, since at the birth of a man He at once deposes and appoints an angel to guard and take care of him." As a princely father gives to a well-beloved son a tutor to watch over him in body and teach him manners, so God cherishes and values us so much that He gives to each of us an angel for tutor. But to come back to the point, we also each of us carry about against us a devil, who keeps an eye upon us

and busies himself in soliciting us to evil and causing in us bad thoughts and worse motions, and is always looking for an occasion and opportunity for doing that, since he never sleeps, and watches our inclination and what is most to our taste, to assail and gain access to us thereby, using our flesh and sensuality as a means to do us harm. So God said to the devil: *Hast thou not considered my servant Job?* (Job ii. 3), speaking as to one who had been a long time a spy upon Job, and always by his side. Thus the devil is ever at our side. And so, when there comes upon you a movement or thought, inciting you to commit some sin or some imperfection, understand that this is a temptation of the devil, and make the sign of the cross, and be on your guard as if you saw that same devil standing by and telling you to do this.

St. Gregory gives an example that well illustrates this point, of what happened to the blessed St. Benedict in regard of a monk of his. He says that this monk was much tempted in his vocation; he thought he could never stand the rigor of religion and wanted to return to the world. He often went with this temptation to St. Benedict, and the saint told him it was a temptation of the devil, and gave him suitable advice. After doing this many times without success, since the novice never ceased making instance to go, the saint, wearied with his importunity, said to him, "All right," and told them to give him his clothes. Still after all, being a father, he could not help feeling it, and put himself in prayer for him. As the monk was going out of the gates of the monastery to return to the world, he saw coming at him a great dragon with open mouth to devour him. Trembling and shaking all over, he set up loud cries: "Help me, help me, brothers, there's a dragon coming to devour me." The brothers rushed to his aid at his cries, and saw no dragon, but saw the monk trembling as though in the agony of death. They took him to the monastery, and when he saw himself inside, he

made a vow never more to go out of it. He fulfilled his vow and thenceforth was no more troubled with that temptation. St. Gregory observes here that by the prayers of blessed St. Benedict he came to see the dragon that was seeking to devour him, which before that he did not see, and so was following it because he did not take it for a dragon or for a devil; but when he saw it and recognized it, he began to cry out and ask for help to deliver him from it. Thus it is no imagination nor conceit of our own brain, but a fact of sober reality, that it is the devil who assails us in temptation. And so also the Apostle St. Peter, like a good shepherd, has warned us; and every day Mother Church brings it to our mind as a fact of great importance: *Brethren, be sober and watch, for your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him manfully, and let not yourselves be carried away by his deceits and persuasions* (I Pet. v. 8).

## CHAPTER XX

### *How We Should Behave in Temptations of Evil and Impure Thoughts, and of Remedies against Them*

ON this subject the first thing to observe is that there are some who grieve and afflict themselves greatly when they are assailed by evil thoughts of blasphemy, or against faith, or foul and impure thoughts, in so much that sometimes they fancy that the Lord has forsaken and forgotten them, and that they must be in His ill graces, since such things pass through their mind. This is a great mistake. Gerson tells of a monk who led a hermit's life in the desert, who was much tempted and afflicted with thoughts of blasphemy and other thoughts very foul and filthy, and suffered this temptation for twenty years without daring to tell anyone, thinking that it was a thing unheard of and unseen, and that anyone who heard of it would be shocked.



At last, at the end of twenty years, he went to a very ancient and experienced father, but even then did not dare tell him by word of mouth, but wrote what he had to say on a paper and gave it to him. The old man read his paper and began to laugh, and said to him: "Put your hand on my head." When he did so, the old man said: "I take all this sin of yours upon myself; let it not be on your conscience any more in future." The monk stood amazed, and said: "But how? I thought myself already in hell, and do you say that I am to take no account of it?" The old man said to him: "Did you perchance take any pleasure in these evil and impure thoughts?" "Good heavens," he said, "no, but great pain and torment." "But at that rate," said the holy man, "it is clear that this was no doing of yours, but you suffered it against your will, the devil using this means to drive you thereby into despair. So, my son, take advice, and if henceforth these evil thoughts return to you again, say: 'On thy head, malignant spirit, be this blasphemy and this filthy thought; I have no mind to take any part in it, but I believe and hold all that Mother Church believes and holds, and would give my life rather than offend my God.' " Herewith the monk was cured, and from that time forward the temptation came to him no more. Here be it noted, by the way, for the benefit of those who fail to manifest their temptations for the difficulty they feel in doing so, how much greater pain and torment it is not to declare them than to declare them. For twenty years was this monk in great affliction and torment for not manifesting his temptation; and on manifesting it he became quiet and peaceful. How much pain would he have saved himself if he had done at the beginning what he did at the end of twenty years! Thus this temptation is no new thing, nor should we lose our wits over it.

It remains to say how we should behave in the like temptations of evil and impure thoughts. Some do not know how to defend themselves under them, since they use much

force and put forth much energy to throw off and resist these thoughts, knitting their brows, wrinkling their foreheads, wagging their heads, shutting their eyes, as though they would say, "No way in here." And sometimes, unless they speak and answer, "I will not," they think they consent. The harm they do themselves by this is greater than the harm the temptation does. There was that courtier of King Saul, uttering loud cries close by his side, and scolding someone else, uttering similar cries at a distance, enough to awaken and disturb the repose of the king (I Kings xxvi. 14): "Who art thou that criest and disturbest the king?" You are troubling and disturbing your own repose hard by, and do you complain of the temptation coming from afar? Take great notice of this, for it is a thing very apt to break heads, especially of scrupulous people. It is not prayer, nor spiritual exercises, that shatters and breaks heads and ruins health, but the man's own scruples and indiscretions. That is what the devil is aiming at, who knows well how far you are from giving consent. And it is no small but a great gain for him when this works out. This is not a business to be dispatched by shakes of the head.

How, then, ought one to resist and cast off these temptations? The saints and masters of spiritual life say that the method of resistance should not be by struggling to cast them off, wearying and tiring oneself and doing violence to one's imagination, but by taking no notice of them. They illustrate this by sundry comparisons, which, though mean, illustrate it well. When little cur-dogs come out to bark at a passer-by, if he takes no notice of them, they are soon gone; but if he does take notice and turns upon them, they turn upon him to bark. So it happens with these thoughts. Thus the remedy is not to take any notice of them, and in that way they will leave us very quickly. Or we ought to act, they say, like a wayfarer passing along a street, and the air is thick with dust blowing in his face, and he takes

no notice of it, but shuts his eyes and goes his way. And for the greater consolation of those who are molested with this temptation, and that they may completely make up their minds to use this remedy, the saints observe that, however bad the thoughts, we must take no notice of them; or rather, the worse they are, the less notice should we take of them, for their being less dangerous. What worse thoughts can there be than those against God and His saints, against faith and religion? But these are the least dangerous, because the worse they are, the further are they by the grace of God removed from your will and consent. Thus you must not be troubled at their coming upon you, since it is no fault of yours, nor under your control, nor is it you that do it, but you suffer it against your will, the devil contriving it to discourage you, and make you fall into despair or into great sadness and affliction.

It is told of St. Catherine of Siena that one time she was much fatigued and afflicted with these thoughts, when Christ our Redeemer appeared to her, and all these clouds forthwith dispersed. She complained gently to her Beloved: "Alas, Lord, where wert Thou when such things passed through my heart?" He said to her: "Daughter, I was there in the midst of thy heart." "My Jesus, wert Thou in the midst of such foul and evil thoughts?" He said to her: "Tell me, daughter, didst thou perchance take pleasure in having such thoughts?" "O Lord, how the pain of it reached to my very soul, and I do not know what I would not choose rather than entertain them." "But who, then," He said, "made thee detest them but Myself, Who was there?" Thus, however evil and foul be the thoughts that you have, if you take no pleasure in them, but rather pain and annoyance, not only has God not forsaken you, but you may take that for a sign that He dwells in you, since it is He who gives you this abhorrence of sin and this fear of losing God. *I am with him in tribulation*, says the Lord (Psalm xc. 5). God was in the midst of the bush and the thorns and the fire (Exod. iii. 2).

St. Bernard says: "This conflict is painful and troublesome; but for all the pain and affliction thrown into it, so the greater the increase of the reward and crown. Sin is not in the feeling, but in the consenting"—*Non nocet sensus ubi non est consensus*. Blossius says in confirmation of this: "Anyone taking complacency in himself, though once in a while, only makes a worse figure in the eyes of God than one would do, suffering for many years the like motions, however evil, provided there be given no consent." Thus there is no ground for being distressed or for taking much notice of these feelings and thoughts; you should behave in them as though they were passing in the mind of someone else, and not in yours; and you may well reckon that they pass outside of you, says a saint, since evil thoughts are in you only in so far as the will consents and no further; and by your not consenting they gain no entry into your house, but only shout and rap at the door from outside.

Hereupon the masters of spiritual life observe that to get frightened over these things and take much notice of them is not only not a good plan, but evil and hurtful, inasmuch as it increases the temptation. This is borne out by experience, and there is a natural reason for it, and philosophers themselves teach it; for fear rouses the imagination, and thinking and letting the mind waver to and fro for a long time on one thing causes it to make a deeper impression on the memory, whereby increase and life is given to the temptation. We see that a man walks unconcernedly along a narrow plank when it lies on the ground; but when the plank is up in the air, fear makes him walk no longer safe and sure, but in great danger of falling, because fear makes the blood rush to the heart and paralyzes the limbs, so he walks with great danger and comes to fall. This is also the effect of fear and pusillanimity in temptations. Thus it is not well to let fear go all lengths in these temptations, nor take much notice of them, because by not noticing



them they are the sooner forgotten. But here Gerson and others observe that, though this particular fear is not good at such times, yet fear of sin in general is good and very profitable, begging God, "Lord, let me not be separated from Thee," and making acts and resolutions rather to die a thousand deaths than commit a mortal sin, without thinking of or bearing in mind this particular temptation which troubles you at the time.

I add to what has been said another expedient which the saints greatly recommend, and it will serve as a general remedy against all kind of interior temptations. It is, when an evil thought comes, to try and divert the understanding to some good topic or reflection, as death, Christ crucified, or the like. And this must not be by doing violence to the imagination, or tormenting or fatiguing oneself, but simply by stealing oneself away, as they say, from the bad thought and occupying oneself with a good one; as when one man goes up to speak to another, and that other never disengages himself to listen to him or give him room to get anything in; or when they say silly things to a sensible man, and he turns his head away, not caring to listen or reply to them. This is a very good way of resisting those temptations, and a very easy and safe way; for the more we are taken up with a good thought, the further we are removed from consenting to a bad one.

For this purpose it will be a great help to dig and delve down deep at meditation time on some good subjects such as are most apt to move us, familiarizing ourselves therewith. By this means one finds there a refuge ready to hand when one is fatigued and worried with temptations and bad thoughts. Thus for this purpose it is well for each one to have certain harbors of refuge to which he can betake himself in such conjunctures, as people take sanctuary. Some betake themselves to the wounds of Christ, especially to that of His side, and find there very good protection, *in the holes of the rock, in the hollow of the wall* (Cant.

ii. 14). Others find it well to think of death, judgment, and hell. Let everyone put his hand to that which does him most good and moves him most, and endeavor to dig and delve well in one of these grounds, that so he may be able to have ready recourse thereto, and find entry and security in it at such times.

The Abbot Smaragdus tells a very amusing story, but pat to this purpose. He says that a religious one time saw two devils standing chatting together. One said to the other: "You there, how are you getting on with your monk?" "For me, I am doing very well. I put him a thought, and at once he sets to work thinking over it, and makes reflections again and again: *How was that thought? Did I dwell on it? Was there any fault of mine in it? Did I resist it? Did I consent to it? Whence came it to me? Did I give any occasion for it? Did I do all I could?* And with that I twirl him round and round, and drive him half mad." The devil has his way when a man takes to reasonings and questions and answers about the temptation, for there will be never wanting to him arguments and replies. The other devil said: "For me things are going very badly with my monk, for no sooner do I put a bad thought before him than he at once has recourse to God or to some other good thought; or he gets up from his seat and takes up some other occupation, not to think of it or make account of it, and so I cannot get at him."

This is a very good way of resisting these temptations and thoughts, to give them no entry and make them no reply, nor reason at all with the temptation, but turn one's head and avoid facing them or taking any notice of them. It is better when this avoidance and refusal to listen is done by turning the attention to some good thought, as we have said; and when that does not suffice, it is good to take up some exterior occupation.

## CHAPTER XXI

*That in Different Temptations We Should Behave Differently as to Our Manner of Resisting Them*

**S**T. JOHN CLIMACUS, treating of discretion, says that in different temptations we must resist differently. Some temptations of their nature are sour and painful, as anger, envy, rancor, hatred, desire of revenge, impatience, indignation, bitterness of heart, sulkiness, quarrelsomeness, and the like. Other vices are fraught with pleasure, as carnal sins, eating, drinking, playing, laughing, talking, and other satisfactions of sense. As for this second class of vices, the more we regard them and fix our eyes upon them, the more they attract our heart and draw it after them; against these we must fight by flying from them, keeping away from occasions of them and promptly turning our sight, memory, and consideration away from them. But the former set of vices we should fight by wrestling with them, looking attentively at their nature, malice, and foulness, the better to overcome them. And this is done with less danger because they do not stick so fast, except anger and desire of revenge, where it is also well to steal away from the topic, not thinking of things that may excite us thereto. Thus St. John Climacus, Cassian, and St. Bonaventure teach the same doctrine, and add that in those former vices one may desire to exercise oneself, and meritoriously seek occasions of struggling with them, as by conversing and dealing with persons who persecute and offend you, in order to learn patience, and subjecting yourself to one who altogether thwarts your will, in order to learn obedience and humility. But in carnal vices it would be a very dangerous indiscretion to desire such temptations and put yourself in the occasion of them. So Christ our Redeemer would never suffer Himself to be tempted with this vice, to teach us that in the like temptation we ought not to put ourselves

in the occasion thereof, even though it be in hope of greater reward and triumph, because this vice is very connatural to man and has mingled with it so much pleasure, not in the will alone, but also in the body, which makes its entry more easy and dangerous.

St. Bonaventure brings a good comparison to illustrate this. As an enemy more easily gains entrance and reduces a city when he has within it some who favor his cause, so the devil our enemy has within us what particularly favors him in this temptation, namely, our body, for the great pleasure that it takes herein, according to St. Paul's word: *Every other sin that man commits is outside of the body* (I Cor. vi. 18). In other sins the body has not so much part, but in this it plays a very considerable part, and therefore it is right to remove ourselves from the occasions and shun and cast them away without quarter; and so the Apostle goes on to say: *Fly* with all diligence thoughts and imaginations coming from *fornication* (I Cor. vi. 18).

It is related in the chronicles of the Order of St. Francis that Brother Giles, Brother Rufinus, and Brother Simon of Assisi met together in spiritual conversation; and Brother Giles said to the others: "Brothers, how do you arm against and resist temptations of sensuality?" Brother Simon replied: "Myself, brother, I consider the vileness and shamefulness of that sin and how horrible it is, not only in the eyes of God, but even in the eyes of men, who, wicked as they be, hide and cover themselves up that they may not be seen committing a sin of sensuality. And from this consideration there comes over me a great disgust and abhorrence, and so I escape from the temptation." Brother Rufinus said: "I prostrate myself upon the earth, and with many tears I call upon the mercy of God and our Lady, until I find myself perfectly free." Brother Juniper said: "When I feel such diabolical temptations and hear them coming in by the senses of the flesh, I at once that same hour shut with a firm hand the gates of my heart, and set



to guard it a host of holy meditations and good desires. And when these suggestions of the enemy come and batter the gate, I reply as from within: 'I am not for opening on any terms; away with you, away! This room is taken and you cannot enter in here.' And as I never give any entrance to that good-for-nothing crew, they take themselves off, beaten and confused." Brother Giles, having heard them all, replied: "I go with you, Brother Juniper, since with this vice man fights more safely by flying from it." Thus the best way of withstanding this temptation is by giving no entry to it, not letting evil thoughts get into your heart; that is the easier way. But if once the evil thoughts do get in, it will not be so easy, but very difficult to dislodge them. The gate is easily defended; but when that is taken, God help us! See further in the Treatise on Chastity, Volume III. The means there proposed may well help us against other temptations.

## CHAPTER XXII

### *Some Important Pieces of Advice for the Time of Temptation*

WE have mentioned remedies enough for temptations; but however many we mention, it is impossible to enumerate them all. Bodily ailments and their remedies are so many and so different that they cannot be put in writing, nor all taught, but much must be left to the decision and judgment of the medical man, that he may apply the remedy which he thinks proper in view of the particular circumstances of the subject; and so it is also in spiritual ailments. Therefore the saints and masters of spiritual life lay it down for a general and very main remedy for all temptations to discover and manifest them to the spiritual physician. But there is one piece of advice which St. Basil gives us in this matter. He says that, as bodily

ailments are not discovered to anybody and everybody, but only to physicians whose business it is to cure them, so temptations and spiritual ailments are not to be discovered to all, but only to those whom God has appointed physicians for this purpose, namely, superiors and confessors, according to the saying of St. Paul: *We who are stronger ought to bear the infirmities of the weak* (Rom. xv. 1). And our rule tells us to have recourse in these matters to the prefect of spiritual things or the confessor or the superior.

This advice is of more importance than, perhaps, some people think. It happens sometimes that one has no mind to discover his temptations to him to whom he ought, and goes and discovers them to someone to whom he ought not, to one, perhaps, to whom he will do harm by discovering them, besides getting harm himself. It may be that the other has the same temptation and weakness; and thus both parties are the more confirmed in it. For this and for other awkward consequences that may ensue, it is very desirable that temptations and spiritual ailments be made known only to spiritual physicians, whose business it is to cure and remedy them, and about whom you may be sure that no harm will be done and benefit will be derived. And so says the Wise Man: *Reveal not thy heart to every man* (Ecclus. viii. 22): *Be on friendly terms with many, but let thy counselor be one in a thousand* (Ecclus. vi. 6).

They give another piece of advice also of much importance for time of temptation, that we should take care at such times to keep up our spiritual exercises and persevere in them with diligence, and greatly beware of leaving them out or cutting them short; because, though the devil gain nothing else by the temptation but to undo us on this point, he will have effected a great deal and reckon himself well paid. Then is the time rather to lengthen out these exercises and to add to them rather than to curtail them; for if the devil wrests out of our grasp the spiritual arms

wherewith we defend ourselves and attack him, it is clear that he will attain his purpose over us all the more easily. Therefore it is most desirable that we should be faithful to God our Lord in times of temptation, and therein His true servants are known. It is not much to persevere in our pious exercises in a fair season with plenty of devotion; but to persevere through storms, temptations, aridities, and desolations is matter of high praise; it is a great sign of true love, and of one who serves God purely for what He is.

A third piece of advice is that in time of temptation one should greatly be on one's guard against making any change or taking new resolutions, for the season is ill-suited for that. In troubled water one sees nothing; let it settle and run clear, and then you will see the pebbles and sands that there are at the bottom. When one is troubled and disturbed by temptation, he cannot well see what befits him. And therefore it is not a good time to deliberate and resolve and determine upon any new project. Let the temptation pass; and when you are quite calm and self-possessed, then you will see better what you ought to do. All the masters of spiritual life insist on this advice; and our Father puts it in his Book of Exercises in the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits. And he gives a good reason therefore: as in time of consolation one is carried and moved by God towards good, so in temptation one is carried and instigated by the devil, at whose instigation no good is ever done.

In the fourth place, it is necessary that in time of temptation we should be careful to make good use of the remedies aforesaid and not fold our arms and be remiss, as will be understood from the following example. It is related in the Lives of the Fathers that there was a monk much molested by the spirit of fornication; and, desiring to get rid of the molestation, he went to one of the approved Fathers of the Desert and said to him feelingly: "Do, venerable father, spend some care and solicitude on me, and

beg God to support me, because the spirit of fornication presses heavily upon me." When the holy old man heard this, he thenceforth entreated God day and night to do something for him. Some days passed, and the monk returned to the father and begged him to pray for him more earnestly, since the temptation stuck to him without mitigation. The father then renewed his supplications to the Lord, sighing and groaning with much insistence, begging the Divine Majesty to strengthen the monk. Again and again the monk returned to him, telling him that his prayers were doing no good; at which the old man was much distressed and marveled that God did not hear him. As he was harassed with this thought, the Lord revealed to him the following night what the reason was why He did not hear him; it was the monk's own negligence and want of determination in his resistance. This was the revelation. He saw that monk seated at his ease, and before him the spirit of fornication, assuming various forms and features of women, playing and making faces, and the monk looking on, taking much pleasure therein; he saw also the angel of the Lord standing by, in great indignation at the monk because he did not get up and have recourse to the Lord, prostrate himself on the earth and pray, and leave off taking delight in those thoughts. Thereby the good old man understood the reason why God did not hear him; it was the monk's own negligence. So the first time that he came back to see him, he said: "It is your own fault, brother, that God does not hear me, inasmuch as you take delight in those evil thoughts. It is impossible for the foul spirit of fornication to depart from you, however much others may entreat God on your behalf, unless you yourself put yourself to the pains of much fasting, praying, and watching, begging God with sighs and prayers to grant you His favor and mercy, and strength to resist evil thoughts. Although physicians administer all necessary medicines to sick people and give them with all care and diligence, small



good will it do them if the patients on their side go on eating unwholesome things. In like manner in the maladies of the soul, although the venerable fathers, who are the physicians of the soul, pray with all the intensity of their hearts to God for those who ask the aid of their prayers, small good will those physicians do if the persons who are tempted do not exercise themselves in spiritual works, saying prayers, fasting, and doing other works agreeable to God." When the monk heard this, he repented with all his heart, and henceforth followed the counsel of the good old man and afflicted himself with fasts, watchings, and prayers, and so deserved the mercy of the Lord and was rid of his temptation. In this way we must behave in temptations, doing what is to be done on our part and taking the means that we ought to take, for in this way the Lord wishes to give us the victory.

And since this resistance to temptations may be greater or less, we should not be satisfied with resisting anyhow, but try to do it in the best way possible. In the chronicles of St. Francis it is related that the Lord showed a great servant of His, a religious of that order named Brother John of Auvergne, the different ways the religious behaved against temptations, especially carnal thoughts. He saw a countless multitude of devils, incessantly shooting arrows at the servants of God. Some of these arrows flew back at the devils who shot them, and they fled away yelling in terror. Others of these arrows shot by the devils hit the religious, but fell at once to the ground without doing them any harm. Others entered the flesh as far as the iron head, and others pierced the body from side to side. According to this vision, then, the best way of resisting, and the way we should aim at, is the first, wounding the devil with the very temptations and arrows wherewith he tries to wound us, and making him take to flight. And this we shall do very well when we draw profit from the temptations wherewith the devil thinks to injure us, as when from the temp-

tations of pride and vanity which the devil brings up we draw greater humiliation and shame; and when from temptation to impurity we draw greater abhorrence of that vice and greater love for chastity, learning to walk with greater recollection and fervor and to have more recourse to God. St. Augustine on those words: *The dragon whom thou hast created to sport with him* (Psalm ciii. 26), says that the servants of God make sport of this dragon, to catch and ensnare him with the same net wherewith he sought to ensnare us, according to that saying of the Royal Prophet: *In the snare that they laid for me, their own foot is caught* (Psalm ix. 16). *Let the trap catch him that he had set hidden for another, and let him fall into his own snare* (Psalm xxxiv. 8). *Coming for wool, let him go back shorn. Let the evil that he desires return upon his own head, and let his iniquity discharge itself on the top thereof* (Psalm vii. 17).

THIRTEENTH TREATISE

---

OF INORDINATE AFFECTION FOR KINDRED







## CHAPTER I

### *How Important It Is for a Religious to Avoid Visits to Relations and Journeys to His Own Native Place*

AS regards the love and affection that we should bear our kindred, our Father lays us down a rule that well suits all religious. "Let each one of those that enter the Society, following the counsel of Christ our Lord, *He that leaveth Father, and so forth* (Matt. xix. 29), account that he is leaving father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and all that he had in the world; nay, more, let him take as spoken to himself that word: *He that hateth not father and mother, yea and his own soul, cannot be my disciple* (Luke xiv. 26); and so he ought to endeavor to destroy all the carnal affection that he had for his relations and convert it into spiritual, loving them solely with that love which well-ordered charity requires, as one who, dead to the world and to self-love, lives only for Christ our Lord, holding Him in place of parents and brethren and all things." It is not enough to leave the world in body; we must leave it in heart also, destroying all affections that attach thereto and incline us to worldly things. There is no harm in loving a relation because he is a relation; nay, on that account he ought to be more loved than another person who is no relation of yours; but if this love rests on natural grounds alone, it is not a love peculiar to a Christian, much less to a religious, since all men, however inhuman and barbarous, wish well to their parents and to those who are bound to them by ties of blood.

But the Christian, and much more the religious, says St. Gregory, ought to ennoble this natural love and purify it by fire in the crucible of divine love, and love his kindred, not so much because nature inclines him to love them, as because God commands him to love them. He should cut off everything that might do him harm and separate him

from the love of the Sovereign Good; he should love them solely to the purpose for which God loves them and to that for which He wishes us to love them. And this is the meaning of our rule—that we should eliminate all carnal affection and convert it into spiritual, making of self-love, love of charity; and of love of the flesh, love of the spirit. And the reason is this, that the religious ought to be dead to the world and self-love; and so there ought not to live in him now the love of the world, but solely the love of Christ. And our Father rests this rule on texts of Holy Scripture, a thing that he is not accustomed to do in other rules and constitutions, though he might easily have done it, since the doctrine of our Constitutions is taken from the Gospel; but his one object was to give us this doctrine in the plainness and sincerity in which he had received it from God. But coming to treat of kindred, he at once rests what he says on texts of Scripture, as we see also how, when dealing with the matter of leaving one's property to one's relations, he at once quotes the Scripture text which says, *He distributed and gave to the poor* (Psalm cxi. 9), and the counsel of Christ, *Give to the poor* (Matt. xix. 21). He did not say, *Give to thy relations*, but *Give to the poor*. Our Father saw well that all this was here necessary, for that this affection is so natural, and with it we are all born, and it is so rooted in our hearts and has such a power over us.

This is a matter of great importance for a religious, and is treated of at length by Saints Basil, Gregory, Bernard, and many others. We will put together briefly the substance of it. St. Basil exposes very well how becoming it is for a religious to shun intercourse and conversation with his relations and excuse himself from visits and journeys to the place of his birth. He gives many reasons which will evince the importance of this. Besides the fact of our doing no good among our relations thereby, we get from it much harm to our souls. They tell us of their troubles, their lawsuits, the loss of property and social position, and

all their griefs and vexations; and so we come back to our house laden with all that gives them pain. Moreover, we put ourselves thereby in many occasions of sin in many different ways and manners, because from this association with our relations there readily springs up again the memory of the events of our past life, which is often no small occasion of sin. Thereby old wounds are reopened and bleed afresh, as we call to mind such a house, such a place, such an occurrence, and all that is associated therewith, which recollections may trouble us and do much harm. A strong reason for the harm that this does us may be found in the counsel that masters of spiritual life give, not to call to mind the sins of our past life in detail, even when our aim is to excite grief and contrition for them, but only in general, making, as it were, a bundle of them, that they may not come back to harass us again. How much more harmful would it be for us to take this occasion without necessity! You have no ground afterwards for complaining of the disturbance and harm that you experience, since you have sought it yourself and have got your deserts.

St. Basil further says that they who are fond of conversing with relations, gradually by such conversations imbibe and drink into their souls the evil habits and affections of the same. Thus taken up with worldly thoughts, the soul cools down, loses its fervor of spirit, loses steadfastness and firmness in its first purposes; thus it goes on getting secularized and unconsciously returning to the world, according to that saying of the prophet: *They mingled with the Gentiles, and learned to do as they did, and served their idols and took scandal therefrom* (Psalm cv. 35). What impression could be wrought upon the children of Israel from their stay among the Philistines except their being led to adore their idols and take scandal and ruin from them? The like impression will be wrought in you if you have intercourse with your relations. You will learn their worldly language, their *walking not in truth* (John

viii. 44; II John i. 4; III John i. 3), but with falsehoods, hollow pretenses, and compliments, as is the way of the world; its idols please you, its petty honors and comforts; you are full of presumption and desire to have your own way, which is another bit of worldliness that has infected you.

St. Basil alleges another main reason showing how much it behooves us to shun intercourse and conversation with our relations. It is the great harm done by compassion and natural tenderness. Upon intercourse and conversation with our relations there naturally follows our being overjoyed at their prosperous fortunes, and grieved at their adversities and troubles, and burdened with thoughts and cares, wondering whether they have plenty of all that is needful, what it is that they are in want of, whether this employment they have taken up will prove a success, whether they will come well out of this business in respect of dignity or emolument. All such thoughts and cares go towards weakening and diminishing our virtue and spiritual strength, to such an extent that any subsequent temptation may come to overthrow us; for, says St. Basil, such a one is in the condition of a statue, wearing the habit of religion without having the true spirit of a religious. His body alone is in religion, but his heart is there in the world among his relations.

Cassian tells of a monk who set up his dwelling place near his relations, and they provided him with all necessities, so that he had nothing to do but to attend to prayer and reading. He was very satisfied with the arrangement, taking it for a very quiet and peaceful life. He went one day on a visit to the great Anthony, and the saint asked him where he lived. He answered that he lived near his kinsfolk, that they supplied him with all necessities, and that he had no other occupation but to give his mind to God. "Tell me," asked the saint, "when any affliction comes upon your people, are you saddened thereat? And when things go well with them, do you rejoice at their pros-



perity?" He confessed openly that he shared both the one and the other; necessarily, he said, it could not be otherwise. "Understand then, son," said the saint, "that in the next life you will be counted in the number of those whose partner you have been in this in their joys and sorrows." He will be counted among seculars in the next life who converses with them and about their affairs in this. For this reason, says St. Basil, it is very important for us to avoid intercourse and conversation with our relations; for, after all, as the proverb says, "What eyes see not, heart will not break over." And as the actual giving up of our property, which we do by the vow of poverty, aids us to lose all affection for it; so the actual giving up of our relations, and neither dealing nor conversing with them, will make us forget this fleshly affection and deliver us from the great dangers that follow from it. We must be parted from them in deed to be detached from them in heart; the latter will not follow without the former. Maybe we are parted a long way from them, and yet our heart goes out to them; what would it be if we dealt and conversed with them?

This is the reason why in our order such visits of Ours to their native places are so strictly forbidden, as all know. But that so holy and profitable a prohibition may be possible to be carried into execution, it is necessary that we should help it on; and when your relations ask your superiors to give you leave to go and see them, you should be the first to resist, and persuade them that such a visit is not at all the right thing for you. And for that, sufficient reasons will not fail you if you wish to find them; hereby relations are put off and remain content, to your satisfaction and sometimes also to their own. And this is what superiors desire, and are much edified thereby, when you say that it is not necessary and that you will cancel the proposal with them. For sometimes superiors cannot come to a satisfactory settlement in any other way with

him who asks or with the intercessors whom they sometimes bring in, if you yourself do not come forward in the matter; and so they yield and give a permission which is squeezed out of them—which is not an obedience, but a permission, and the superior had much rather you did not go. This is a very good plan, as well for this as for other like cases. When your relations or friends or penitents ask you to act, or take a hand in some affair which is not suited to our vocation, do not throw all the burden on the superior, obliging him either to break with them or grant their request. Do not push the thing to those lengths; divert your friends from their purpose with civil words, giving them to understand that it is not a thing within the purview of our profession. This is the part of good religious—not as some do, who, not to leave the petitioner offended with them, seek to throw the odium on superiors.

St. Jerome on those words of Christ: *Be ye prudent as serpents* (Matt. x. 16), says: “The example of a serpent is quoted, who with his whole body defends his head, in which his life is seated.” So we should always defend our head, who is our superior, and not let it be the other way about; that is to say, we should not expose the head that the body may escape a blow, nor to excuse ourselves throw the blame on the superior. And we should be particularly careful of this in the case I am speaking of. And commonly the whole point of this and other like businesses rests with ourselves. Let one only will it, and the difficulties will easily resolve themselves. And so what I would advise in this matter to anyone who desires to do the right thing is, to begin with, to use all the endeavor he can to excuse himself from these visits; and when excuses fail, let him be compelled thereto by obedience, telling the superior if he apprehends any danger therein; and withal there is ground for apprehension, and he needs to go well prepared.

It is related of the Abbot Theodore that once his mother came to see him, fortified with many letters from bishops

and prelates telling him to receive her. The holy Abbot Pacomius, his superior, gave the requisite permission. He replied: "Father, warrant me that at the day of judgment I shall not have to give an account of this visit, and I will pay it." Then the holy abbot said: "Son, if you think it is not proper for you, I do not oblige you to it." The one would not warrant it; the other would not pay the visit unless the superior took it on his conscience; and there the matter rested. And it turned out well; for his mother determined to take up her abode in a monastery of nuns hard by, of which those monks had care, with hopes of seeing some time amongst them her son. He did well in declining to pay those visits except out of pure obedience, and with his superior taking the matter on his conscience. That is the way for a good religious to visit his native place, when that has to be. And if we were well aware of what commonly comes of these visits, we should be more afraid of them and more eager to excuse ourselves from making them. Histories and lives of the Fathers are full of instances of monks' coming to grief from such journeys. It would be well for us to gather experience at the expense of others and not suffer the loss in our own persons.

St. Basil writes: "If you are dead with Christ to your parents and kindred, why return again to their society and company? See what a bad case it is to take back again what you have once left for Christ's sake; wherefore beware how you desert your post, your quiet and recollection, for the sake of your kinsfolk, lest in leaving your post you also leave your religious spirit and training"—a thing that often happens. Jesus is not found among His kinsmen and acquaintance (Luke ii. 44-45). "How should I find Thee among my relations, O good Jesus, when Thou wert not found among Thine own?" asked St. Bernard. If you wish to find Him, seek Him not among your relations, but in the Temple, in prayer, in recollection, and you shall find Him. Of Father Francis Xavier we read in his Life

that, when he came from Rome to Portugal to go thence to the Indies, he passed within four leagues of his native place, and never would go there to visit his relations and his mother, who was still alive, [*morte depuis longtemps* Brou, i. 87] for any importunity, though he knew that, if he let that opportunity slip, he should never have another of seeing them again. The like did Father Master Peter Faber, passing within five leagues of his home. And our blessed Father Ignatius, when he was forced to go to Loyola, would not lodge in his brother's house, but in the hospital.

## CHAPTER II

*That a Religious Should Also Avoid, as Far as Possible, Being Visited by His Relations and Any Communication with Them by Letter*

A GOOD religious, who heartily desires to serve God and occupy himself with his spiritual progress and the end for which he came into religion, must not only shun these visits to relations and returns to his native place, even on an excuse, but must try to avoid as far as he can all manner of intercourse with his kinsmen. Not content with himself not going to visit them, he must further try not to be visited by them. St. Ephrem says that we must use all persuasion with our relations not to visit us, except at most once or twice a year; and he adds: "But if you can altogether cut off their useless conversation, you will do better." With good reason does he call it "useless," and our Father in his Constitutions applies the same term, for useless it is; and not only without profit, but very harmful, as we have said. And that we may understand how pleasing to God is this austere detachment and keeping out of the way of our relations and avoiding their visits, the Lord has been pleased to show and confirm the same by miracles.



In the "Spiritual Meadow" there is a story of a holy monk named Cyriacus, who on one occasion when his parents and relations had come to see him and were calling out at the door of his cell, knowing thereby the folk that were there and what they had come for, first made prayer to our Lord, begging Him to deliver him from them and arrange things so that they should not see him. Having made this prayer, he opened his door and came out of his cell, without any of those people seeing him, nor getting to see that anyone had gone out. So he got clear off, making his way to the interior of the desert, and would not come back until he was quite sure that they had gone. Of the holy Abbot Pacomius, Surius relates how a sister of his came to see him, but he would not go out to see her, nor let her see him, but sent her a message by the porter: "You have heard that I am alive and well; go in peace." And the answer did her much good, as in the case of the mother of Theodore, for she settled down in a monastery of nuns that was near there and became a religious.

A good religious should contrive to excuse himself, not only from visits, but also from communication by letters, so far as he can, for this also is a source of disturbance and agitation of mind. As by not visiting them you deliver yourself from many visits, so by not writing to them you deliver yourself from many letters of theirs. That holy man (A Kempis) very well says: "If you know how to let men alone, they will let you alone to go about your own business." All depends on what you want; if you want, you will find means for everything that you do want. We have already left our native place, our home and kindred, for God. Let us complete the step by abandoning them altogether; so we shall be free and disengaged to remember God the more and love and serve Him the more.

Cassian tells of a holy monk, very much given to prayer and contemplation and very careful to preserve that purity and cleanness of heart which such exercises require. He

had lived fifteen years in the desert, when at the end of that time they brought him a great packet of letters from his native place, which was in the Province of Pontus, from his parents, relations, and friends. He took his packet, and set himself to thinking and turning over in his mind: If I read these letters, what a multitude of thoughts will they raise in me! What various waves of emotion will rise thereupon in my heart—of vain joy if I find that my relations are doing well, or useless and unprofitable sadness if I find them in bad luck! For how many days will the memory of those who have written to me be forcing itself on my mind, and rob me of the repose and tranquillity of my prayer and contemplation! For how many days will there be represented and set before me the outlines and features of their faces, and the remarks they will make to me, and the things they will write to me! When shall I finally forget and rase from my memory these images! What a labor it will be to return to the state of tranquillity and forgetfulness of worldly things I now enjoy! What will it profit me to have left my relations in body if in heart and memory I return to them and converse and amuse myself with them! So saying, and turning these things over in his heart, he takes the packet of letters just as they had come and flings it into the fire, saying: “Away with you, ye thoughts of flesh and blood, and burn ye all along with these letters, that ye may not make me return to that which I have left.” Not only would he not read any letters, but he would not even open them or see the names and signatures of the writers, or even look at the addresses to recognize the hand, that they might not bring back upon him the memory of the writers nor hinder the tranquillity and peace of his heart. We read a similar example of our blessed Father Ignatius. A very good lesson for those who are not satisfied with one reading of their letters, but keep them carefully put away to read them again and again, and lick their lips and enjoy the taste of them, refreshing the

memory of their kindred. Now that you have not burned them before reading them, why do you not burn them as soon as read, and with them get rid of all thoughts of flesh and blood, that they may not trouble you more?

### CHAPTER III

*That Even though It Be under Plea of Preaching, a Religious Should Shun Intercourse with His Relations and Visits to His Native Place*

THIS temptation of going to one's native place and visiting and conversing with one's relations comes to some under pretense of preaching to them and doing good to their souls. When temptations come in this way, disguised under color and appearance of good, they are apt to be more dangerous, since they are not taken for temptations, but for good motives. On the words: *Catch for us the little foxes that destroy the vineyards* (Cant. ii. 15), St. Bernard says that this is one of those little foxes that are apt to get in under a deceitful appearance of good, and destroy and ruin many. And the saint says that he knew some who had come to ruin by this. They thought to gain others, and lost themselves; especially since kinsmen are not ordinarily fit persons to do spiritual good to kinsmen, since, as they knew them yesterday, when they went playing with them, they do not treat them with the esteem and respect that a Gospel preacher requires. So said Christ our Lord: *No man is a prophet in his own country* (Luke iv. 24). And when God wished to make Abraham a great preacher and father of the faithful, He bade him go out from his country and the society of his relations, friends, and acquaintances and betake himself to Mesopotamia, where no one knew him. And here is a thing worthy of consideration. When St. Paul was at Jerusalem praying in the Temple, God bade him depart from thence and go

preaching to the Gentiles, "for here in Jerusalem you will do no good"—*non recipient testimonium tuum de me* (Acts xxii. 18). "O Lord, but here they know me, a disciple at the feet of Gamaliel, and know that I persecuted them that believed in Thee; and when they were stoning St. Stephen, I kept their clothes." "Go to, you understand not; go out of this country where you are well known, and I will make you a preacher to the Gentiles. Go where you are not known, and there you will do much good." And think you that you will do good in your native town? What fruit can you gather there among your relations? How shall you be able to preach and persuade them to despise the world and its comforts when they see you enjoying and amusing yourself in the world in the midst of flesh and blood?

Peter de Ribadaneira in one of his manuscript dialogues relates an amusing example of what befell one of the Society, who, overcome by his mother's loving entreaties, was visiting her at her house in Messina. He says that one day a priest in the church was engaged in exorcizing an evil spirit, who was in possession of a poor woman, in a crowd of spectators. In an evil moment this religious came in and wanted to help the priest, so he began threatening the wicked spirit and bidding him in the name of God to go out of that body. The spirit gave no answer but "Mummy, Mummy." All quite entered into the fun of the answer, since they knew and were quite aware of the reason of his visit, and he remained very much abashed and put out of countenance. Now the same answer they will be able to make to you when in your native place you preach to others that they should mortify themselves and renounce the comforts and amusements of the world.

Sulpicius Severus relates another example to this purpose, not amusing but terrifying. He says that a young man of Asia, very rich in temporal goods and of illustrious lineage, married and had a son. He was at the same



time tribune of Egypt; and on the journeys that he used to take at times on the business of his office, he had occasion on one of them to pass through the desert in which the Fathers lived, where he saw many monasteries and cells of monks. He entered into conversation with the Abbot John, who spoke to him of the affairs of his soul and salvation. Such an impression did the conversation make on him that he returned no more to his own house, but renounced the world and began in the desert a life so admirable, and took so much to heart the practice of virtue, that in a short time he was ahead of many of the old men. While the wind was blowing astern so favorably, there came upon him a strong temptation that it would be better to return to the world and see to the salvation of his wife and child, since he was now so disenchanted from its vanities that the benefit should not be for himself alone. Under this appearance of charity the devil deceived him. So after he had been four years in the desert, he took the road leading to his birth-place. Passing by a monastery, he called upon the monks and acquainted them with his intention. They all told him that it was a temptation of the devil and that many had been befooled in that way. He did not believe them, but stood fast to his own view, took leave of the monks, and sought to go on with his journey. Hardly had he gone out of the monastery, when our Lord permitted a devil to enter into his body and torment him mightily, making him gnash his teeth and foam at the mouth. He was dragged in men's arms into the monastery, and there it was necessary for the violence of his raving to cast him into prison and tie his hands and feet. And though the monks besought God for him, and exorcized the devil, the Lord permitted that it should not leave him till two years were over. Then he was delivered and returned "a sadder and a wiser man" to his former place and monastic life—a great lesson to the others to persevere in the way they had begun and not let themselves be deceived under those false appearances of

piety. Hence it will be seen how far a religious ought to be from those journeys to his native place and visits to his relations; since if, even when it is done under plea of preaching to them and producing fruit in their souls, saints say it is a temptation, having in it many inconveniences and dangers. What must it be when it is done solely for their comfort and consolation or one's own!

#### CHAPTER IV

##### *That a Religious Should Stand Particularly on His Guard against Occupying Himself with the Business Affairs of His Relations*

**A**BOVE all a religious should be very careful not to charge and occupy himself with the business affairs of his relations, for the many very awkward consequences and dangers which that involves. St. Gregory says: "There are many who, after having given up their properties and all that they had in the world, and what is more, themselves, putting down and making small account of themselves and trampling with equal constancy on prosperity and adversity, have let themselves be fettered with the ties of flesh and blood. Unwisely desirous of complying with this obligation and prompted by affection for flesh and kindred, they return to things that they had left and forgotten. Forgetful of their profession and making more of what they owe to their families, they occupy themselves with family business and external affairs. They go into audience chambers and before tribunals, entangle themselves in the meshes of the law and earthly things, give up their interior peace and quiet, and plunge anew into worldly concerns to the imminent risk of their souls." St. Isidore says the same: "Many religious for love of their relations plunge not only into earthly concerns, but into lawsuits and litigations, and

for the temporalities of their kindred forfeit the eternal salvation of their own souls."

This is one of the greatest bottoms and bogs that there are on this ground, when fleshly affection comes to overmaster a religious so far as to make him take over the care of the business affairs of his kindred and charge himself therewith, as we see and experience more than we could wish, for our sins. St. Basil says that this comes because the devil, envious at seeing a religious lead a heavenly life on earth, living in the body as though he lived without it and steadily gaining what he has lost, strives under pretext of piety and even of duty to hamper religious with these cares, that so they may lose the peace and quiet of their souls, and go lukewarm in the love they had for God and the fervor with which they were traveling to perfection. It is quite a sight to see the vigorous effort that the devil makes here, making a tool of these same kinsfolk till it looks as though they had no resource in all their businesses, suits, and differences, and in all their marriages and embarrassments, but to have immediate recourse to their relation in religion. He has to be like the contractor who is responsible for the meat supply to the town; they take it for granted that he is the man readiest to hand, the man who has most free time, the man who has nothing else to think of but to attend to their business. The Carthusian, Louis of Saxony, says very well, speaking of prelates and secular clerics: "God has taken sons away from the clergy, and the devil has given them nephews." And he quotes the same in verse:

*Cum Factor rerum privaret semine clerum,  
Ad Satanae votum successit turba nepotum.*

For this end Satan contrives to bring up your cousin's affairs in the courts, and your female relative's settlement in marriage, to get you on the dance and withdraw you from your post and profession. That is his object—not the

good of your relations, but your hurt and loss. Unhappy religious! Did he leave his property and his rank and his conveniences and comfortable estate, all to rid himself of these cares and embarrassments, and is he here to burden himself with other people's worries and be as one under contract to manage all the affairs of his kith and kin, and lose thereby the fruit of his vocation? That was a good answer of the Abbot Apollo, as related by Cassian. One night when he was in his cell, a brother of his came to him to ask him to come out and help to draw out an ox that had fallen into a pool or morass, since he could not draw it out by himself. Abbot Apollo asked him: "Why did you not call upon that other brother of yours who was there?" He answered: "Why, he has been dead now fifteen years." Then said Apollo: "Know, my brother, that I have been dead now twenty years, and buried in this cell; so I cannot come out of it to help you." This is how a religious ought to behave in like occasions; and if he does not know how to shake off the cares and businesses of his relations, let him hold it for certain that he will receive great injury to his soul, even though it be under pretext of piety and however much he may seek to justify it.

"How many religious," says St. Jerome, "under pretext of piety and a false compassion for their kindred have lost their souls and come to a bad end!" Daily experience shows it us, and many examples. How many have lost their vocation and ceased to be religious from meddling with the cares of their kinsmen's estate and trying to advance their rank! How many apostates from their order do we see in these ways, who have gone off to comfort their parents, and afterwards serve for nothing but to devour their substance and bring their old age to sorrow by their evil life! So St. Basil calls this an arm or arrow of the devil, which we ought greatly to eschew, since he takes it for an instrument and means to do us vast mischief.



And let no one assure himself in this matter, or think that the whole proceeding is sanctified, purified, and passed by obedience. As we said of visits to relations and journeys to one's native place, so it is here. In many cases superiors had rather you did not mix yourself up with the business of your kinsfolk, thinking such avoidance the better course, but they allow it because they do not see in you virtue enough for anything else. That is not obedience, but simple permission; the superior comes down to your weakness, and he rather does your will than you do his. If that monk we spoke of would not visit his mother because the superior would not take it on his conscience, how much more reasonable will it be for you not to plunge into or meddle with the business affairs of your relations, except it be purely out of obedience, your superior saying that he takes it upon his conscience, seeing the danger there is in them.

## CHAPTER V

### *What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples*

THEY tell of the holy Abbot Poemen (Ποιμήν, Pastor, John x. 11) that there came once to Egypt a judge who, having heard of the fame and reputation of the saint, desired to see him, and therefore sent a messenger to beg of him to be so good as to receive him, since he wished to pay him a visit. Poemen was sad and put out at this message, thinking within himself that, if distinguished persons began to come and visit him and pay him honor, many of the common people would at once flock round him and disturb him in his solitary life and exercises; and the devil would destroy and rob him of the grace of humility, which with so much labor, by favor of the Lord, he had managed to gain and preserve from his youth upwards, and so he might fall into the snare of vainglory. Thinking these

things over, he determined to excuse himself and not receive the visit. The judge was greatly grieved at this, and said to one of the officers of the court: "I put it down to my sins that I cannot see this man of God." Thenceforth he desired to see him by any occasion that offered. In the end he hit upon a plan which seemed to him sufficient to compel Poemen to receive his visit with a good grace, or himself to come out of the desert and pay him a visit. The plan was this. He arrested a nephew of the abbot, his sister's son, and put him in prison; and secretly told his officer that, not to distress the holy old man by his nephew's imprisonment, he was sending him a message to the effect that, if he would come and see the judge, the prisoner at once should have his discharge, although the matter against him was so grave and incriminating that it should not be let pass without severe punishment. When the prisoner's mother heard this and understood that, if her brother would visit the judge, the prisoner should be set free, off she went to the desert and began to knock at the door of her brother's cell, with many cries and sobs and abundance of tears begging him to go and see the judge and plead for her boy. St. Poemen, though he heard her, said nothing to her, and would not open the door for her to come in. Seeing this, his sister grew angry and began to call him injurious names: "Cruel and hard-hearted man, with bowels of steel, how is it that my great grief and lamentations move you not to compassion, understanding that my boy, the only son I have, is in danger of death!" Poemen, who heard this, said to the monk his companion, who waited on him: "Go and give her a message in these words: 'Poemen never had sons, and so does not mourn over them.'" With this message his sister went away disconsolate. The judge learned what had happened in the desert; and, seeing that the abbot excused himself from coming to visit him, he said to certain friends of his: "Persuade him at least to write to me a petition for his release." Many persons

pressed this message on Poemen and begged him to write to the judge. Wearied with their importunities, he wrote in these terms: "Let your honor command diligent inquiry to be made into the case of this youth; and if he has done anything worthy of death, let him die, that he may pay in the present life the penalty of his sin and thereby escape the everlasting pains of hell."

A similar story is told in the *Lives of the Fathers* of the holy Abbot Pastor, that they could not induce him to intercede for a nephew of his who was condemned to death, not to implicate himself in things touching flesh and blood.

We read of our blessed Father Ignatius that he never would concern himself with the marriage of his niece, the heiress and lady of the house, nor write a letter on her behalf, much as he was entreated by sundry great lords, as the Dukes of Nejera and Albuquerque. He answered them that these affairs did not concern him and were not in keeping with his profession, since it was so many years that he had said good-bye to these cares and become dead to the world; that it was not well for him to take up anew what he had abandoned so long before, and deal with matters foreign to his vocation, and put on the garment that he had stripped himself of, and dirty once more the feet which by the grace of God, at so much cost to himself, he had washed when he went away from home (Cant. v. 3).

Of our Father Francis Borgia we read in his *Life* that they could never prevail with him to supplicate his holiness for a dispensation for his son, Don Alvaro de Borgia, to marry his niece, daughter of his sister, Doña Juana de Aragon, who had inherited the marquisate of Aleañices; and this though his son was so interested in the matter, since it was a question of inheriting so handsome an estate; added to the fact that the pope bore him great good will to favor him and whatever touched his interests. And it is said there in his *Life* that in his dealing with the emperor there happened another case of the same sort, to the emper-

or's great edification, who thence understood the truth of what had been told to him of the detachment of Father Francis from his children, how he behaved to them as though they were not his children.\*

Let us consider here what business affairs these saints withdrew from, though they might have dispatched them so speedily; and see on the other hand in what affairs some religious are immersed nowadays. If those illustrious men, holy as they were, were so afraid of dealing with such matters, how is it that we, who are not so holy and therefore run greater risk, are not afraid? I believe that the reason why we are not afraid is because we are not so holy; and that, if we were quite in earnest in our pursuit of holiness and perfection, we should dread the great dangers that lurk in such matters, and fly from them as we see the saints did.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Of Other Evils and Losses Caused by Affection for Kindred, and How Christ Our Redeemer Taught Us to Keep Out of Their Way*

THE blessed St. Basil says that this natural affection and tenderness for kindred is apt at times to bring a religious into a situation in which he comes to commit sacrilege, by stealing from his order to succor his relations. And though the man does not take from one's order to give to his family, he takes from what devout people had to give to the order; and from here and from there, from penitents and friends, he goes looking for something to give to his relations; and that sometimes turns to the prejudice of his ministries because he cannot use such liberty

---

\* Histoire de S. François de Borgia par P. Suau S. J. ch. vii., pp. 477-500, Relation de Famille.



in dealing with those whose help he needs and to whom in this way he stands indebted. In other ways there is some scruple of conscience about the vow of poverty, whether they give me the gift for myself, or whether they give it me for somebody else; and again, whether I give the gift or somebody else gives it on his own account. Add to this, this affection for kindred blinds a man's eyes to such an extent that he takes no heed of these particulars, thinking that lawful which sometimes is unlawful, and thinking that not against the vow of poverty which really is so. And though you do not come to steal anything else from your order, yet in the time that you waste on the business of your family there is theft and fraud enough, since, as St. Basil says, you are not your own, but belong to your order, to which you have offered as well your person as all your works and labors. For this reason your order has care, not of your soul alone, but also of your body, giving you all that it requires; yet here you are receiving your sustenance from your order and at the same time busying yourself in the service of your kinsfolk. All this is stealing on your part, besides the disedification you give to those who see you so attached and tied down to your kith and kin.

Not without great reason did Christ our Redeemer say: *If any man cometh to me, and hateth not his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yea and his own soul, he cannot be my disciple* (Luke xiv. 26). Hereupon St. Gregory well observes that in the same way in which He commands us to hate ourselves, He commands us also to hate our parents and relations. As you have to conceive a holy hatred against yourself, mortifying and denying yourself in all that the flesh asks against the spirit and against reason and not giving in thereto, because that is the greatest enemy that you have; so also you have to conceive a holy hatred against your parents and relations, not giving in to them, but denying them in all that may be an obstacle to your salvation and to your

spiritual advancement and perfection, because they are a part of yourself and likewise your enemies. *And a man's enemies are the people of his own house* (Mich. vii. 6; Matt. x. 36).

It is related in the chronicles of St. Francis how a man said to holy Brother Giles that in any case he was determined to be a religious. The servant of God answered him: "If you are determined to do that, go first and kill all your relations." The man begged him with tears not to oblige him to commit such sins. Brother Giles answered: "How come you to be so lacking in understanding? I did not bid you to kill them with a material sword, but with the sword of the spirit; for according to the word of the Lord he that hateth not his father and mother and relations cannot be His disciple." It is worthy of consideration how many times over our Savior repeats this doctrine in His holy Gospel. St. Basil notes this, and quotes these two instances. The first is that of the young man who wished to follow Christ, but begged Him to allow him to go first and dispose of his estate and inheritance, to whom Christ replied: *No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God* (Luke ix. 62). It is looking back when, having begun to put your hand to the plough of the evangelical counsels, you turn back to implicate yourself in the business of the world which you have left. Dread the sentence of Christ, that this means being unfit for the kingdom of God. The second instance is that of the other young man who also wished to follow Christ, but begged leave to go and bury his father, such a proper thing to do and a thing that could be done in a short time; and He gave him not leave, but replied: *Let the dead bury their dead* (Luke ix. 60). The phylactery observes: "If he was not allowed even to bury his father, woe to them who, after making profession of monastic life, return to secular business."

And Christ was not satisfied with warning us in word and by the examples of other people, but by His own exam-

ple He would commend to us this avoidance of kindred, as is seen in many passages of the Gospel, even to the length of outwardly seeming to show rigor and severity to His most holy Mother, as in the apparent rebuff which He gave her when she had found Him in the Temple: *How is it that ye sought me? did you not know that I must be found at the business of my Father?* (Luke ii. 49). And at the wedding, when the wine ran short: *What business is it of ours to look to that?* (John ii. 4). This to teach us, says St. Bernard, the way to deal with our relations when they seek to distract us from the end and aim of our profession; we are to put them off, saying: "It behooves us to attend to the business of God and our salvation." And to that other who said: *Master, bid my brother share the inheritance with me:* He answered dryly: *Man, who hath appointed me judge to divide between you?* (Luke xii. 14), thereby to teach us that we ought to keep out of the like businesses, which are not consistent with our profession.

## CHAPTER VII

*How This Temptation Is Apt to Disguise Itself Not Only under the Appearance of Piety, but of That of Duty, and the Remedy to Be Applied Thereunto*

SINCE this temptation is apt at times to make its way and avail itself not only of the pretext of piety, but even of duty—and these are the most dangerous temptations—to prevent and obviate the great mischief that might otherwise result in the Society, our Father in his Constitutions enacts that all who enter it should be asked whether in case of any doubt arising as to their being bound to go to the aid of parents or relations, they will let themselves be guided by what the Society and the superior thereof shall ordain and not allow themselves to be carried away by their own judgment. For in an affair of relations, as in an

affair of our own, affection blinds us and readily leads us astray, so that we cannot be good judges in such a case. For the quietening of all consciences and the banishment of all scruple, our Father has provided this remedy. Therefore everyone is bound to acquiesce in what the Society shall tell him in this matter, there being in our body so much learning and so much fear of God; and he will find its decision quite conformable to sound theology and conscience. To this end the proposal is made and the question asked at the outset of everyone who wishes to enter the Society, and they do not receive him unless he is ready to submit to this. We owe many thanks to God that we can securely throw off all solicitude on this point, and so are left free to apply more earnestly to our advancement and perfection.

For this same reason our Father also directs that, when one of our Society makes his renunciation of property and there is question of dividing the property among his relations on the score of their being poor, he must leave it to the judgment of two or three learned and conscientious persons, to be chosen by the individual with approval of the superior, and it is for them to judge whether his relations are really poor and are in real need, to the end that affection for flesh and blood may not lead him astray. Thus to give away one's property to strangers, this consultation is not necessary, but to give it to one's relations it is required, on account of the danger of natural love and affection. So St. Gregory observes on that case in which Christ forbade a young man to go to bury his father (Luke ix. 60), that what He would not have forbidden him to do for a stranger, but rather would have advised it, and it would have been a work of mercy, He forbids in the case of his father, to give us to understand that what may be done for strangers often cannot be done with propriety for relations, on account of the danger that usually attaches to it and the disedification of those who see a religious involved and embarrassed in things of flesh and blood. It is clear that



one behaves in a different way in the business of a stranger from that in which one acts in the affairs of one's own kinsmen and relations; for the former is done without anxiety and disturbance, but the latter, as experience shows, causes great restlessness and robs a man of the peace of his soul, and stands greatly in the way of his spiritual exercises. Thus, when at times it may be necessary to give some help to relations, the better and safer course for the man himself and the more edifying for neighbors is that some other father should take charge of the transaction, and he be out of it. And in the Society we have an order that the thing be done in that way, and such is the teaching of St. Basil. Besides, when a man is employed on his own in these matters, if there be in him anything of the world and of the flesh, he would wish his people not to be poor, nor to suffer, while God would have them be poor and suffer need, that being more expedient for them for their salvation, and for him for his humiliation. There is also another vanity and folly apt at times to come in here, in that some religious make it their aim and endeavor that their parents and relations may be more and have more than they would have been and would have had but for some of their family being religious. Herein those persons show that they are religious but in name only, since, where they ought to be more humble, they display more vanity and presumption.

And for our sins we have experience more than we could wish, how many under this pretext are tempted in their vocation, and contrive to leave their order under color of providing for the needs of their parents or brothers. I go further and say that such persons, commonly speaking, do not start from this, nor is this the main cause that makes them falter in their vocation, but other hidden causes that they themselves know—to wit, their small stock of virtue and mortification, the weakness they feel in themselves for bearing the rigor and perfection of religious life, *that is*

what makes them flag therein; and as they cannot openly quote this title, they have recourse to others that are more or less colorable. That it is so, we have practical experience daily, and see the cause clearly working in its effects. Oftentimes these renegades have it not in their power to meet the necessities they speak of, nor do they meet them by quitting their order; they would do their families more good by staying in it. That is not their motive in leaving their vocation, but a desire of liberty and living at their ease. *Thou hast not lied to men, but to God* (Acts v. 4). You can never deceive God. Woe to him that begins to hobble and halt, and not acquiesce in what his superiors and his constitutions tell him!

Finally, it is the proper means for gaining the end for which we came into religion, to withdraw from the conversation and affairs of our relations and give them the go-by. He will keep well the commandments of God and the counsels of his profession who, the better to serve God, forgets his relations, and says to father, mother, and brothers, *I know you not* (Deut. xxxiii. 9). St. Bernard says very well, and it is the common doctrine of the saints, that the religious ought to be like another Melchisedech, of whom the Apostle St. Paul (Heb. vii. 9) says he was without father, or mother, or lineage—not that he had none, because, being a real man, he could not be without them, but he is said to have had none because Holy Writ, speaking of him by reason of his priesthood, mentions nothing of this, nor of the beginning or end of his days, to give us to understand that priests (and much more religious) must be detached from all that sort of thing as though they had nothing of it, and as dedicated to spiritual and divine things as though they had dropped down from heaven. Thus they should be at heart like another Melchisedech, having nothing in the world to hold them back or hinder or retard their eager haste to go on their way to God. Let us conclude, then, with the conclusion made by St. Bernard: “Recollect thy-

self and sit apart, away from the multitude of the rest of men; *forget, too, thy native place and thy father's house, and God shall desire thy beauty* (Psalm xlv. 11)." St. Jerome on these words of the prophet says: "A great thing it must be for a man to forget his parents and relations, since such a great reward is promised him for it, that God shall desire his beauty."

In the chronicles of the Order of St. Francis it is related that there entered the order at Paris a master in theology, whose mother had supported him by alms and out of much poverty till she placed him in that rank. Hearing that her son had become a friar, she came to the convent, and with many tears and importunities entreated and cried out to her son, baring her breasts and putting before him the labors with which she had reared him and the need and misery in which he was leaving her. The master was moved by these tears to abandon his purpose, and determined to leave his order the next day. Feeling a great struggle going on in his heart about this, he had recourse to prayer according to his custom and, prostrate before the figure of a crucifix, he said in the agony of his heart: "Lord, I do not wish to abandon Thee! Never do Thou permit such a thing; I wish only to succor my mother, who is in sore need." Saying these words, he raised his eyes to the figure and saw that from the Savior's side there was streaming real blood, and therewith he heard a voice that said to him: "Thou hast cost Me more than thou hast thy mother, seeing that I have created thee and redeemed thee with this blood; thou oughtest not to leave Me for love of thy mother." The master was overpowered with this warning; and, preferring the love of Jesus Christ to the natural love of his mother (who was trying to move him by her necessities to leave that state of life), he persevered in the order and ended his days in it with much praise.

Though in this treatise it seems that we have spoken only to religious, yet if seculars would draw a lesson from it as

we desire, not to disturb religious, nor implicate them in their affairs, nor intrigue with the government of the order, trying to get a relation or a friend to come and stay with them, that will be no small fruit gained as well for them as for us.



FOURTEENTH TREATISE

ON JOY AND SADNESS





## CHAPTER I

### *Of the Great Mischiefs That Follow from Sadness*

**P**UT sadness far from thee, says the Wise Man, for there is no profit in it, and it hath been the death of many (Ecclus. xxx. 24). Cassian composed a book on the spirit of sadness, for, he says, to come and remedy this ailment and infirmity, no less care and diligence is necessary than for the other spiritual infirmities and temptations that present themselves in this life; this for the many great mischiefs that follow from it, which he proceeds there to enumerate, founding his enumeration well on Holy Scripture. Beware, he says, of sadness. Let it not enter into your heart; for if you give way to it and it begins to take a hold upon you, thereupon it will make you lose all taste for meditation; you will think the hour long and not complete it entirely; and sometimes it will make you go altogether without meditation and drop spiritual reading; and into all your spiritual exercises it will infuse such a weariness and loathing that you will be unable to face them. *My soul hath fallen asleep for weariness* (Psalm cxviii. 28), a verse, says Cassian, in which the prophet well exposes the mischiefs which follow from sadness. He does not say that his body has fallen asleep, but his soul, for with sadness and spiritual sloth there comes over the soul such a weariness and disgust for all spiritual exercises and all works of virtue that she is, as it were, asleep, benumbed and incapable of any good. Sometimes even so great is the loathing that a man conceives for spiritual things, that he goes the length of molesting and insulting those who are on the way of virtue and perfection, endeavoring to stop them and withdraw them from their practices of piety.

There is another thing about sadness, says Cassian, that it makes a man disagreeable and rude to his brethren. St. Gregory says sadness moves to anger and peevishness; and

so we find by experience that when we are sad we are easily irritated and have an outburst of temper at anything that comes in our way. Further, it makes a man impatient over the business he has in hand; it makes him suspicious and evil-minded: and sometimes sadness upsets a man so entirely that he seems to have lost his senses and be quite out of his mind, according to the saying of Ecclesiasticus: *There is no sense where there is bitterness* (xxi. 15), no judgment where there is bitterness and sadness. We often see that, when sadness and melancholy reign in a man, he gets such out-of-the-way apprehensions and such groundless suspicions and fears, as to become an object of ridicule to people in their senses, and they talk of him as of a person out of his mind. We have seen grave personages, men of great learning and abilities, so overpowered by this passion that it was a pity to see them, some of them crying like babies, others heaving such deep groans as sounded nothing short of bellowing. And so, when they are in their senses and see that this fit of madness, for so it may well be called, is about to come over them, they shut themselves up in their room, that there they may weep and groan alone by themselves and so not lose credit and reputation with those who see them in that plight.

If you would thoroughly know the mischievous effects that sadness works in the heart, Cassian tells us and the Holy Ghost declares them briefly by the Wise Man: *As a moth in a garment, and as a worm in timber, so doth sadness prey on the heart of man* (Prov. xxv. 20). A moth-eaten garment is worthless and can serve no purpose; and timber full of dry rot is no good for building—no weight can be laid upon it, for it immediately crumbles to pieces; so a man full of melancholy, sadness, and despondency becomes useless for any good works. And the evil does not stop there, but, what is worse, sadness in the heart is the cause and root of many temptations and many falls. *Sadness hath killed many* (Ecclus. xxx. 25); it has made them



fall into sin. So some have called sadness a nest of robbers and a cave of devils, and with good reason. They quote to this effect what holy Job says of the devil: *He sleepeth in the shade* (xl. 16). In that shade and gloom, in the mist and darkness of that confusion which you are in when you are sad, there the devil sleeps and lurks; that is his nest and den; there he lays his bag nets, as they say: that is the attitude of mind that he is looking for, to assail you with all the temptations that he pleases. As snakes and wild beasts watch for the darkness of the night to come out of their holes: *Thou hast brought on darkness, and it hath become night, in it all the wild creatures of the forest shall go about* (Psalm ciii. 20), so the devil, *the old serpent* (Apoc. xii. 9), is awaiting the night and darkness of sadness, and then he assails you with all manner of temptations. *They have their arrows ready, prepared in the quiver, to shoot in the darkness at the right of heart* (Psalm x. 3).

The blessed St. Francis used to say that the devil rejoices much over a sad heart because he easily either plunges it in gloom and despair or turns it to worldly pleasures. Be careful note taken of this teaching, since it is of great importance. When a man is going about sad and melancholy, sometimes the devil leads him on to excess of discouragement and despair, as he did to Cain and Judas. When that game does not seem to pay, he accosts him with worldly delights, or at times with carnal and sensual delights, under pretext that thereby he will get out of the grief and sadness which possesses him. Hence it is that in times of sadness there often come temptations against vocation. The devil represents to the man that there in the world he shall live cheerful and contented; and sometimes sadness and melancholy has drawn men out of religion. At other times the devil brings up carnal and impure thoughts, gratifying to sensuality, and gets the mind to rest on them under the notion that so the sadness will be

cast off and the heart find relief. This is a thing much to fear in the case of sad and melancholy people, in whom such temptations are quite an ordinary thing. St. Gregory well observes that, as man naturally desires some delight and satisfaction, when he does not find it in God and spiritual things, the devil, who well knows our inclination, represents and puts before him sensual and impure objects and offers him gratification and satisfaction therein, thinking that thereby his present sadness and melancholy will be mitigated and relieved. Understand, the saint says, that, if you find no satisfaction and relish in God and spiritual things, you are driven to seek it in vile and sensual things, because man cannot live without some gratification and recreation. He must seek it at the top of the tree or at the bottom.

To sum up, the evils and mischiefs that follow from sadness are so great that the Wise Man says: *All evils come with sadness* (Ecclus. xxv. 17). And again: *Death comes with sadness* (Ecclus. xxxviii. 19), even everlasting death, which is hell. So St. Augustine explains the saying of Jacob to his sons: *Ye will bring my grey hairs with sorrow to hell* (Gen. xlii. 38). He says that Jacob feared lest the sadness of the loss of his son Benjamin might make such an impression on him and do him so much harm as to put his salvation in danger and plunge him into the hell of the damned. For this reason, he says, St. Paul advises us to beware of sadness, lest perchance for excess of sadness we may come to shipwreck (II Cor. ii. 7). It is for the great mischiefs and dangers that follow from sadness, that Holy Writ and holy men so strongly advise and warn us to beware of it—not for your comfort and enjoyment, for if that were all it would matter little whether you were sad or cheerful. For the same reason the devil desires so much to see us sad and strives so much to make us so, because sadness is the root and cause of so many evils and sins.

## CHAPTER II

*In Which Are Given Sundry Reasons Why It Befits Us to Serve God Cheerfully*

**R**EJOICE in the Lord always, again I say unto you rejoice, says the Apostle St. Paul (Phil. iv. 4). The same is repeated many times in the Psalms of the Prophet David. *Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye just, and glory all ye right of heart* (Psalm xxxi. 11). *Let them leap for joy and be glad in thee, O Lord, all them that seek thee* (Psalm lxi. 5). *Sing ye to the Lord exultingly; all ye dwellers on the earth, serve the Lord in gladness, come with merry hearts into his presence* (Psalm xcix. 2). *Let their hearts be glad who seek the Lord* (Psalm civ. 3). And in many other places he exhorts us again and again to serve God cheerfully. And this was the greeting of the angel to Toby: *God give thee ever much joy and cheerfulness* (Tob. v. 11). The blessed St. Francis used to say: "To the devil and his members it belongs to be sad, but to us ever to rejoice in the Lord." *In the dwellings of the just there should ever be heard the cry of cheerfulness and salvation* (Psalm cxvii. 15). Has not the Lord brought us to His house and chosen us from among thousands? How, then, can we be sad?

To understand this to be a thing of great importance, it were enough to see how many times Holy Writ recommends and insists on it, and to see on the other hand the great losses that we sustain, as we have said, in consequence of sadness. But to make the case superabundantly clear, and that in the light of ocular evidence of the advantage thence ensuing, we will mention some reasons showing how proper it is to walk always in the service of God with this cheerfulness of heart. Let the first be the fact that the Lord so requires it. *God loveth a cheerful giver*, says St. Paul (II Cor. ix. 7), according to that saying of the Wise

Man: *All that thou givest, give with a cheerful countenance* (Ecclus. xxxv. 11). Here in the world we see that every master of a house looks to his servants to serve him cheerfully and is displeased when he sees them in the sulks and serving him with a bad grace and a downcast air; such service is not pleasing to him, but rather vexes him. So God our Lord takes delight in our serving Him with a hearty good will and cheerfulness, and not with gloom or sadness.

Holy Scripture notes that the people of Israel offered vast store of gold and silver and precious stones for the building of the Temple with hearty good will and cheerfulness (I Chron. xxix. 9-17); and King David rendered God thanks at seeing the people offer their gifts with so great joy. That is what God sets great store by. He does not reckon so much of the work done as of the will with which it is done. Even here among men we are wont to say, the will wherewith the deed is done goes for more than the deed itself; and we set great store by that will, even though the thing done be in itself small. And, contrariwise, however great the thing done, if there is no heart or cheerfulness in the doing of it, it calls forth neither our esteem nor our gratitude, but rather our displeasure. They say very well that to serve a good dish with nasty sauce renders the whole service disagreeable.

The second reason is that it redounds much to the glory and honor of God to serve Him cheerfully, for in that way the doer of the service shows that he does it with all his heart and thinks it all too little in comparison with what he desires to do. They who serve God in sadness seem to wish to convey the impression that they are doing a great deal and that they are ready to burst with the effort, that they can scarcely bear the burden for its being so great and heavy; and this attitude is thankless and offends. That was one of the reasons why the blessed St. Francis liked not to see sadness on the face of his friars, inasmuch as it



gives the impression of reluctance in the will and sloth in the body for doing good; whereas others, who go about the work cheerfully and gaily, seem to say that what they do is nothing in comparison with what they desire and would like to do. So St. Bernard says: "Lord, what I do for Thee is scarce the labor of an hour; and if it be more, for love I feel it not"—*Opus meum vix unius est horae; et si plus, prae amore non sentio*. This gives great satisfaction to the Lord. So He says in the Gospel: *When thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that men may not see thee fasting*; which means to say, put yourself in festal garb and look cheerful, that it may seem that you are not fasting or doing anything particular. *Be not as hypocrites* (Matt. vi. 16), who seek to let all know that they are fasting, and attract attention to their doing something out of the common. By the way, it may be well observed here that there are some who, to practise modesty and recollection, think it necessary to go about with heads down and a rueful countenance—and they are mistaken. Pope St. Leo says: "Religious modesty should never be sad, but saintly"—*non moesta, sed sancta*. A religious should ever wear an air of cheerful modesty and modest cheerfulness. And to know how to combine these two things is a great grace and ornament to a religious.

The third reason: Not only does it greatly redound to the honor of God, but also to the profit and edification of our neighbor, and stands surety for virtue. For they who serve God in this way persuade many men by their example that there is not that heaviness of heart and difficulty in the way of virtue which the wicked imagine, since they see them taking that way with all good humor and cheerfulness. Thereby men, who naturally love a cheerful and contented life, are greatly encouraged to give themselves to virtue. For this reason particularly it greatly behooves us to show a cheerful face in our ministries, since it is our business to have so much to do with our neighbor, our end and insti-

tute being to gain souls to God. In this way many are gained and brought over, not only to virtue, but to perfection and religious life. We know cases of persons having left the world and entered religion for seeing the cheerfulness and satisfaction in which religious live. What men desire is a happy life; and if they knew the happiness and contentment of a good religious, the world would be unpeopled and all would flock into religion; but this is a hidden manna, which God has hidden away and kept for those whom He has been pleased to choose. To you the Lord has discovered this hidden treasure, and has not discovered it to your brother; and so he stays where he is there outside, while God has brought you in here, for which you owe Him infinite thanks.

The fourth reason why it befits us to live in cheerfulness is because a work commonly is of greater merit and value when it is done with this cheerfulness and alacrity, which secures the work's being done in better style and greater perfection. Even in the world of philosophy Aristotle said: The cheerfulness and relish with which a work is done gets it done to perfection, while sadness spells bad work. So we see by experience the vast difference between what is done heartily and what is done reluctantly: in the latter the worker does not seem to care for anything beyond saying that he has done it; while in the former he takes pains to do well what he does, and tries to do it to the best of his power. Add to this what St. Chrysostom says, that cheerfulness and satisfaction of soul gives strength and sustenance to work. And so says the Prophet David: *I ran in the way of thy commandments when thou didst enlarge my heart* (Psalm cxviii. 32). Cheerfulness widens and dilates the heart; so the prophet says: Lord, when thou didst give me this cheerfulness wherewith my heart was enlarged, I ran with great activity in the way of thy commandments. Then labor is not felt: *They shall run, and not be fatigued; they shall walk and not faint* (Isaias xl. 31).

On the contrary, sadness narrows, compresses, and confines the heart; it not only takes away all desire of doing anything, but also takes away the strength to do it, and makes the doing of that tedious which before was done with facility. Thus the priest Aaron confessed his weakness when, God having slain his two sons at one blow, and then his brother Moses reprehending him for not having offered sacrifice to the Lord, he replied: *How could I please the Lord in sacrifice, with a mournful and sad soul?* (Levit. x. 19). And the children of Israel in their exile at Babylon said: *How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land?* (Psalm cxxxvi. 4). And we see by daily experience that, when we are in sadness, not only our spiritual strength is diminished, according to that text of the Wise Man: *The spirit is cast down in grief of soul* (Prov. xv. 13), but our bodily strength also, every arm and every leg feeling as though it had a hundred-weight attached to it. For this reason saints advise us not to go sad under temptation, since sadness takes away the vigor of the will and makes a man cowardly and faint-hearted.

Another reason may be gathered from those already mentioned, showing how desirable it is for a servant of God, and especially a religious, to keep cheerful. It is that, when anyone is seen to go cheerfully about the business of religion and virtue, he gives great satisfaction and affords good hope that he will persevere and go on as he has begun; whereas, when we see anyone sad, he occasions surmises and fears about his perseverance. As when you see a man carrying uphill a great load of wood, treading heavily, puffing and groaning and stopping, and here one stick falls and there another, you say at once: "The load is too much for that man; I reckon he will have to drop it halfway;" but when you see another tripping lightly under his burden, singing cheerfully as he goes along, you say thereupon: "That man could carry even more than he has got." In the same way, when a man does the exercises of virtue and

religious life sadly and gloomily, sighing like a drudge under the burden, he gives you the idea that he cannot last; for to go ever rowing and forcing your way upstream is the life of a galley slave, a very violent thing and unnatural. But when one goes cheerfully about humble offices and other exercises of religion, as well corporal as spiritual, and does everything readily and nimbly, he gives good hope of going on and persevering.

### CHAPTER III

#### *That the Ordinary Faults into Which We Fall Should Not Be Enough to Make Us Abandon This Cheerfulness*

THE saints set so much value on our keeping up our courage and cheerfulness that they say we should not be discouraged even over our falls, nor lose heart, nor go about sad and melancholy. Sin being one of the things for which we may reasonably be sad, as we shall say presently, nevertheless, says St. Paul, this sadness should be tempered and allayed by the hope of forgiveness and the mercy of God, so as not to cause discouragement and disheartenment, *lest perchance it happen that such a one be overwhelmed with excess of sadness* (II Cor. ii. 7). So the blessed St. Francis greatly disliked seeing any such sadness among his friars; and said to one of his companions who was looking sad: "A servant of God ought not to be sad except for having committed some sin; if you have committed one, repent and confess it, and beg God's pardon and mercy, praying with the prophet that he will restore to you your former joy" (Psalm l. 14). "Give me back, O Lord, that cheerfulness and alacrity that I felt in Thy service before I sinned, and sustain and strengthen me with the magnificent and powerful spirit of Thy grace." So St. Jerome explains this passage. Father Master Avila with much reason blames sundry persons who walk in the way of God



full of useless sadness, with hearts embittered, without taste for the things of God, disagreeable to themselves and disagreeable to their neighbors, out of heart and disconsolate. And many of them there are, he says, who do not commit mortal sins, but say that they behave in this manner for the venial sins they commit, and for not serving God as they ought and desire. This is a great mistake; for much greater are the losses which ensue upon this distress and unmeasured sadness than upon the fault itself; and when they might have cut the evil short by some exercise of prudence and decision, these people make it grow, and tumble from one pit into another. That is just what the devil wants to bring about by this sadness, to rob them of all energy and strength for work and not suffer them to succeed in doing anything well.

The lesson that we should learn from our faults and falls should be, in the first place, a sense of shame and humiliation, recognizing that we are weaker than we thought. Secondly, to beg more grace of the Lord, seeing that we need it. Thirdly, to live henceforth with greater care and caution, taking warning from what we have done once how to behave another time, anticipating occasions and removing them betimes. In this way we shall do more than by outbursts of discouragement and sadness. Father Master Avila says very well: "If for the ordinary faults that we commit we are to go crestfallen, sad, and disheartened, which of us men shall have rest or peace, seeing that we all sin?" Aim at serving God and doing what in you lies; and if you do not do all you might and fall into some faults, be not astonished at that nor discouraged, for so are we: you are a man, and not an angel; weak, and not confirmed in grace. God knows well our weakness and misery, and would not have us discouraged at that, but only that we should get up again promptly after a fall and beg more strength of the Lord, as the child that falls gets up at once and runs as before.

St. Ambrose says the falls of children do not make their father indignant, but arouse his tenderness. In this way, he says, God behaves with us, according to the saying of the prophet: *As a father hath compassion on his children . . . because he knoweth the clay of which we are made; he remembereth that we are dust* (Psalm cii. 13-14). God knows well our weakness and misery, and loves us as His weak and feeble children; and so these falls and weaknesses of ours rather move Him to compassion than to indignation. One of the great comforts that we have, weak in the service of God as we are, is to understand that God is so rich in love and mercy as to bear with us and love us although we do not answer to His love so entirely as in reason we should. God is *rich in mercy* (Eph. ii. 4); His mercy surpasses our sins. As wax melts before a fire, so do our faults and sins vanish before the infinite mercy of God. This should greatly encourage us to live always in much content and cheerfulness, to understand that God loves us and wishes us well, and that for all these ordinary faults that we commit, we lose not one point of the sanctifying grace and love of God.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### *Of the Roots and Causes of Sadness, and Its Remedies*

**B**UT let us see the roots and causes whence sadness springs, that so we may apply the necessary remedies. Cassian and St. Bonaventure say that sadness may spring from many roots. Sometimes it springs from natural infirmity and a prevalence of melancholy humor in the body, in which case the remedy belongs rather to physicians than to theologians. But it is to be observed that the melancholy humor is engendered and increased by the melancholy thoughts the man entertains. So Cassian says that we should be no less careful to prevent these sad and mel-

ancholy thoughts' arising in us and carrying us away than we are in checking thoughts that come to us against chastity or against faith, for the great losses which, as we have said, may accrue to us thereby.

At other times, he says, without any particular cause going before provocative thereof, a man is apt to find himself of a sudden sad and melancholy, so as to have no enjoyment of anything, not even of friends and society which he used formerly to like, but everything vexes and offends him. He does not want to see or converse with anybody; and if he does converse and talk, it is not with that pleasantness and affability which he used to show, but dryly and peevishly. Hence we may gather, says Cassian, that our fits of impatience and harsh and disagreeable speeches do not always arise from occasion thereof given by our brethren, but from within. The cause is ourselves; our not keeping our passions under control is the root from which it all springs. Thus the means to keep peace is not by shunning intercourse and conversation with men—it is not that that God commands us—but in the practice of patience and thorough mortification of our passions. If these are not mortified, wherever we go and whithersoever we fly, we carry with us the cause of our temptations and troubles.

The story is well known that Surius relates of a monk who by reason of his passionate temper and ill-restrained outbursts of anger was a burden to himself and others; and so determined to leave the monastery of the holy Abbot Euthymius, in which he lived, thinking that, when he was rid of all intercourse with others and lived by himself, his anger would cease for lack of occasion to excite it. He did so and, shutting himself up in a cell, took with him a jug of water; and by contrivance of the devil it was spilled. He went back to fill it with water again, and a second time it was spilled, falling to the ground. He went a third time to fill it and set it down carefully, and a third time it was spilled; and then, with more anger than usual, he seizes

the jug and flings it to the ground, where it is smashed to pieces. After doing that, he began to reckon the matter up, and came to see that it was not the company of the monks and communication with them that was at the root of his falling into fits of impatience and anger, but his own want of mortification; and so finally he returned to his monastery. Thus it is that the cause of your restlessness and impatience lies in yourself, and not in your brethren. Mortify your passions, and in that way, says Cassian, you will have peace even with wild beasts, according to that saying of Job: *The beasts of the field shall be tame to thee* (Job v. 23)—how much more your brothers!

At other times, says St. Bonaventure, sadness is apt to arise from some trouble befalling you, or from your not having gained some object of your desire. St. Gregory and St. Augustine and other saints also specify this cause, and say that the sadness of the world springs from a man's being attached to worldly things; for it is clear that he must be saddened who sees himself bereft of what he loves. But he who shall be loosened and detached from all things of the world, and put all his desire and contentment in God, will be free from the sadness of the world. Father Avila says very well: "There is no doubt but that grief comes of desire; and thus the more desire, the more grief; the less desire, the less grief; and where there is no desire, there is ease." Thus our desires are our executioners; they are the torturers that torment and throttle us.

Coming down now more to particulars, and applying things to ourselves, I say that oftentimes the cause of sadness in a religious is his not being indifferent to all that obedience may lay upon him: this is what is apt often to make him sad and melancholy, and go about with a gloomy and overcast countenance, asking himself: "What if they take this away from me, which I find to my liking? What if they order me this, for which I feel a repugnance?" By the mere fact of a man's desiring to have what he has not



or fearing to lose what he has, his life must be one of pain and uneasiness. But a religious who sets himself with indifference to anything that obedience shall enjoin him and has placed all his content and satisfaction in doing the will of God, is always satisfied and cheerful, and nothing can put him out of his contentment. The superior may move him from this office or from this college, but he cannot move him from the contentment that he has in this consideration; since he has placed it not in being here or there, or in holding this office or that, but in doing the will of God. And thus he carries his contentment with him wherever he be, and in any duty whatever that they put him to. If, then, you wish to be always cheerful and contented, put your contentment in doing the will of God in all things, and put it not in this or that, or in doing your own will, for that is no way to find content, but to come in for a thousand discontents and uneasinesses.

Further to declare the matter, that which is commonly the cause of our fits of melancholy and sadness is not the humor of melancholy, but the humor of pride reigning in our hearts. So long as this humor shall reign in your heart, make sure that fits of melancholy and sadness will never be lacking to you, because occasions will never be lacking, and thus you will live in perpetual pain and torment. To this we may reduce the case that we have just been speaking of, of a man's not being indifferent to anything and everything that obedience may command him; because very often it is not the labor or difficulty of the office that is proposed to us—because there will usually be greater labor and greater difficulties in the high offices and posts that we covet and desire—but it is pride and desire of honor that is at the bottom of the trouble. This it is that makes the laborious post seem easy, and the light and easy burdensome, so that the mere thought and fear of having such a thing put upon us is enough to plunge us into sadness and melancholy.

The remedy for this sadness clearly will be, to be humble and content with a lowly position. Such a one will be free from all these sadnesses and uneasinesses, and enjoy much peace and quiet. *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls* (Matt. xi. 29). So St. Augustine explains these words; he says that, if we imitate Christ in humility, we shall feel no labor nor difficulty in the practice of virtues, but much facility and sweetness. What makes the difficulty is self-love, self-will, and private judgment, desire of honor and esteem and amusement and comfort. Humility gets rid of and clears away all these obstacles, making a man think little of himself, deny his own will and judgment, and despise honors and reputation and all temporal goods and satisfactions. Once rid of all this, you find no difficulty in the practice of virtue, but great peace and ease.

## CHAPTER V

### *That Recourse to Prayer Is a Grand Means for Getting Rid of Sadness*

CASSIAN says that for all sorts of sadness, by whatever way or from whatever source they come, an excellent method is to betake ourselves to prayer and think of God and the hope of the life everlasting that is promised us. Herewith all clouds are dissipated, and the sky lights up, and the spirit of sadness flies away, as the evil spirit fled from Saul and left him when David played on his harp and sang. And the Apostle St. James in his canonical epistle (v. 13) prescribes for us this remedy. *Is any of you sad? Let him pray.* And the Prophet David tells us that he practised it. "When I feel sad and disconsolate, the remedy that I use is to think of God, and with that I am comforted"—*Renuit consolari anima mea; memor fui Dei et consolatus sum* (Psalm lxxvi. 4). "The thought of Thee, O Lord, and

of Thy commandments and of Thy promises, is for me a song of joy; that it is that refreshes and comforts me in this land of exile and pilgrimage, in all my labors and distresses"—*Cantabiles mihi erant iustificationes tuae in loco peregrinationis meae* (Psalm cxviii. 54). If here on earth conversation with a friend is enough to drive away melancholy and restore cheerfulness, what should it be to converse with God? So the servant of God and good religious should not take as a means to cast off his fits of melancholy and sadness talking and distraction and free play of the senses, nor the reading of vain and profane things, still less singing them, but having recourse to God and recollection in prayer—that should be his comfort and relaxation.

The saints draw attention to the story of Holy Writ, how forty days after the deluge Noah opened the window of the Ark and let out the raven to see if the earth was now dry enough for him to leave the ship, and the raven returned no more: hence the saying, "The raven's messenger." Thereupon he sent after it the dove, which, as Holy Writ says, *finding no resting place for her feet, returned to the ark* (Gen. viii. 9). The saints ask the question: Since the raven did not return, it is clear that he found resting place for his feet; how, then, does Holy Writ say that the dove found no resting place for her feet? The answer is that the raven settled upon the quagmires and upon the dead bodies; but the dove, simple, white, and fair creature, made not her food of dead bodies, nor her resting place of quagmires, and so returned to the Ark, finding elsewhere no resting place for her feet nor place of refreshment. So the true servant of God and good religious finds no satisfaction nor recreation in those dead things, those vain amusements of the world, and so returns like the dove to the ark of her heart, and all her recreation and consolation in all her labors and griefs is recourse to prayer, remembrance of God, a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament, there to console herself with Christ, giving Him an account of her

troubles and saying to Him: "How could I be sad, O Lord, being in Thy house and company!"

On those words of the Royal Prophet: *Thou hast given joy to my heart* (Psalm iv. 7), St. Augustine says: "Joy is not to be sought in exterior things, but there within, in the secret chamber of the heart, where Christ our Redeemer says (Matt. vi. 6) that we should pray to the eternal Father"—*Non ergo foris quaerenda est laetitia, sed intus, in interiore homine ubi habitat Christus, in ipso corde, in illo cubiculo ubi orandum est.*

Sulpicius Severus relates of the blessed Bishop St. Martin that he found alleviation of his labors and wearinesses in prayer. As blacksmiths, to lighten their labor a little, are wont to give a few idle strokes on the anvil, so he prayed while he seemed to be taking recreation. Of another servant of God it is related that, being in his cell, laden with most grievous sadness and incredible affliction, wherewith God was pleased at times to try him, he heard a voice from heaven in the interior of his soul saying to him: "What dost thou here, throwing thyself away in idleness? Rise and set to work, reflecting on My Passion." He rose at once and set himself to diligent meditation on the mysteries of the Passion of Christ, and at once the sadness left him and he was consoled and encouraged; and, continuing this reflection, he never again felt the like temptation.

## CHAPTER VI

*Of Another Very Ordinary Root of Sadness, Which Is the Not Going on As We Should Do in the Service of God; and of the Great Cheerfulness That Comes of a Good Conscience*

ONE of the chief causes and origins of fits of sadness and melancholy not uncommonly is a man's not dealing straight with God, and not doing what he ought according



to his state and profession. We see by experience, and everyone has the experience within himself, that, when we live in fervor and care for our spiritual advancement, we live such cheerful and happy lives as to overflow with delight; and on the other hand, when we are not doing as we ought, we are sad and disconsolate. *A wicked heart shall yield sadness, a wicked heart shall be weighed down with griefs*, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. iii. 29; xxxvi. 22). It is the property and natural working of evil and sin to cause sadness and grief in the soul. This property of sin God announced to Cain when he sinned; for as soon as he began to envy his brother Abel, Holy Writ says: *Cain became exceeding angry, and his face fell* (Gen. iv. 5). He carried within him such anger and inward rage that it made him go quite gloomy and crestfallen, showing plainly in his countenance the bitterness and inward sadness of his soul. And God asked him: *What is the reason that thou walkest thus troubled, sad and crestfallen?* And as Cain gave no answer, God answered for him, that this is the natural result of sin, saying: *Dost thou not well know, that if thou dost right, thou shalt reap satisfaction and joy?* And so another reading has it: *If thou dost right, thou shalt lift up thy face*, that is, be cheerful: *But if thou dost ill, thy sin shall at once be at thy gate, knocking to come in to torment thee* (Gen. iv. 7). And at once also it shall appear in thee externally by the cast of thy countenance. As virtue, because it is according to reason, naturally causes great cheerfulness in the heart, so vice and sin naturally cause great sadness, the man fighting against himself and against the natural dictate of his reason, and upon that the worm of conscience is there within him, gnawing and preying upon his vitals and making him cry out.

St. Bernard says: "There is no punishment greater or more severe than a bad conscience. For, though other people see not your faults and know them not, it is enough that you know them: there is the witness that is ever accus-

ing and tormenting you; you cannot hide yourself nor escape from yourself." Whatever you do and whatever amusements and recreations you seek, you cannot get rid of the remorse and outcries of your conscience. So that philosopher [Seneca] said that the greatest punishment that can be awarded to a fault is the having committed it, for the great torment wherewith a man's own conscience is tormented when he does wrong. Plutarch compares this pain to the heat and cold of a fever. He says that, as sick people receive more pain from the shivering and burning that comes of their illness than healthy persons in ordinary life do from the cold and heat that is due to the weather, so the accesses of sadness and melancholy that come of our own faults and the consequent remorse of our conscience cause much greater pain and torment than what comes of accidental mishaps and disasters, but without fault of ours. And this particularly holds good of one who has already begun to taste the sweetness of God and led a good life for some time in fervor and diligence, and afterwards comes to fall away and lead a tepid life; for to fall into poverty after having been rich is a sadder and more distressing existence than that of those who never have known what riches were. When you remember how in bygone days you led a devout life and were careful to serve God, and the favors that the Lord then did you, and now you see yourself fallen off from all that, it is inevitable that acute feelings must be aroused and smite the heart.

If, then, you wish to banish sadness from you and live ever happy and cheerful, the way is to live well and do your duty according to your state of life. So says St. Bernard: "Would you never be sad? Live well"—*Vis nunquam esse tristis? Bene vive*. Enter into yourself and give up the faults that are the cause of this sadness, and so it will cease and cheerfulness will come instead. "A good life is always accompanied with joy and cheerfulness, and a bad life with pain and torment"—*Bona vita semper gaudium*

*habet, conscientia rea semper in poena est* (St. Bernard). As there is no greater pain and torment than the remorse and outcries of a bad conscience, so there is no greater satisfaction and joy in this life than the testimony of a good conscience. *There is no delight to surpass joy of heart*, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. xxx. 16). *A mind void of care is as a continual feast* (Prov. xv. 15). As a guest at a banquet is delighted with the variety of dishes and the presence of his fellow guests, so the servant of God who does his duty is delighted with the testimony of a good conscience and with the sweet perfume of the presence of God, of which he has great assurances and conjectures in his soul, according to that saying of St. John: *If our heart reprehendeth us not, we may approach God with confidence* (I John iii. 21). And the Apostle St. Paul says that a good conscience is a paradise and a glory and a bliss upon earth. *This is our glory, the testimony of our conscience* (II Cor. i. 12). St. Chrysostom says that a good conscience, arising from a good life, drives away and scatters all darkness and bitterness of heart as the sun at his rising drives away and scatters all dark clouds. So is all sorrow, falling on a good conscience, extinguished as a spark of fire falling on a deep lake. St. Augustine adds that, as honey is not only sweet itself, but sweetens even disagreeable things with which it is mixed, so a good conscience is not only joyous and pleasant in itself, but yields joy in the midst of afflictions and renders them sweet and palatable, according to the saying of the prophet: *The judgments of God, which are His holy commandments and the fulfilment of His law, are sweeter than the honeycomb* (Psalm xviii. 10-11). Not only is the service of God sweet in itself, but further it sweetens all the afflictions and troubles of this life.

We read in Church histories that the persecutors of the faith did quite a new thing, of which there was no memory of its ever being done in past times. It was that all those who, on their being called up and put to torture, had denied

the faith, they put in prison along with the holy martyrs. And that their punishment might be without comfort, they were no longer accused as Christians, but as murderers and malefactors. Thereupon was noticed the difference between the one set of prisoners and the other in mien and countenance. The saints came into court and to torture rejoicing, with an indescribable look of God in their faces; their fetters adorned them like collars of pearls, and from the filth of their prison they come out breathing a sweet odor to Christ and His angels and to themselves, as if they had not been in prisons but in pleasure grounds. The others came out sad, with heads down, horrible to look at and hideous beyond all foulness. To the one their own conscience was a vexation and a torment ruder than the irons and chains and stench of the prison; to the others their good conscience and the hope of rest and glory was an alleviation of their pains and a refreshment. This is the ordinary experience of good men. So great is the joy of a good conscience that often, when a good man finds himself in sorrow and affliction, and, turning his eyes in all directions, sees nothing to give him comfort, then when he turns them within and sees the peace of his conscience and the testimony that it bears him, he finds consolation and strength, because he knows that all the rest, come what may, neither makes nor mars his main interest, but only that.

Hence follows something that is very consoling; for if a good conscience, standing well with God, is a cause of cheerfulness, so also such spiritual cheerfulness will be a great sign and indication of a man's having a good conscience and standing well with God, and being in His grace and friendship, for the cause is known by the effect. And so St. Bonaventure observes: "Spiritual joy is a great sign of the indwelling of God in a soul that is in His grace and love." *Light is risen for the just, and joy for the right of heart* (Psalm xcvi. 12), while darkness, gloom, and sadness are for the wicked. *The wicked walk in darkness* (Psalm



lxxxi. 5). *Their ways are full of wreckage and misfortune, but the way of peace they have not known* (Psalm xiii. 3). Thus one of the chief reasons why the blessed St. Francis desired to see this spiritual joy in his religious was that it was a sign of the indwelling of God in them, and that they were in His grace and friendship. *The fruit of the Spirit is joy*, says St. Paul (Gal. v. 22). This spiritual joy, which rises and springs as from a fountain from cleanness of heart and purity of life, is a fruit of the Holy Ghost, and so is a sign of His indwelling there. And so much did St. Francis rejoice at seeing this cheerfulness in his religious that he used to say: "If at any time the devil tempts me with heaviness of heart and sadness, I set myself to look and consider the cheerfulness of my friars and companions, and at once I am freed from the temptation at the sight as if I had seen angels." To see the joy of the servants of God, who are in His grace and friendship, is like seeing angels on earth, according to that word of Scripture: *I have seen thee looking as an angel of God* (Esther xv. 16). *Thou art goodly in mine eyes as an angel of God* (I Kings xxix. 9).

## CHAPTER VII

### *That There Is Such a Thing as Good and Holy Sadness*

**B**UT someone will say: Are we always to be cheerful? Never to be sad? Is there any sadness that is good? To this St. Basil answers that there is a sadness that is very good and profitable; for one of the eight beatitudes which Christ our Lord lays down in the Gospel is: *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted* (Matt. v. 5). St. Basil says, and St. Leo Pope, and Cassian also mentions it, that there are two sorts of sadness. One is worldly, when one is sad for something of this world, its adversities and troubles; and that sadness they say the servants

of God ought not to have. In the Lives of the Fathers we read of St. Apollonius that he used to preach to his disciples that sadness does not become the servants of God, who have their heart set upon the hope of the kingdom of heaven. Let the Gentiles be sad, he said, and the Jews, and the rest of unbelievers; let sinners too weep unceasingly; but as for the just, who hope with lively faith for the enjoyment of everlasting goods, let them be glad and rejoice. For if they who love perishable and earthly things rejoice and are glad at good success in attaining them, how much more reason have we to be glad and rejoice in God and in the everlasting glory that we hope for! And so the Apostle would not have us give way to unmeasured sadness even for the deaths of our friends and relations. *We would not have you, brethren, be ignorant as regards the dead, that ye mourn not like other men who have no hope* (I Thess. iv. 12). He does not say absolutely that we should not mourn, for to show some sentiment of emotion on that account is natural, and not a bad but a good thing, and a sign of love. Christ our Lord showed this emotion, and wept at the death of His friend Lazarus, and the bystanders said, *See how He loved him* (John xi. 36). But what St. Paul means is that we should not mourn like unbelievers, who have no hope of another life, but moderate our sorrow with the comforting thought that soon we shall see them all united with God in heaven; that this one goes before, and we presently shall follow after him. Though, being men, we cannot omit to make use of the things of the present life, yet we must not dwell much on them, but take them on the way. *Let them that weep, says the Apostle, be as though they wept not and them that rejoice as though they rejoiced not* (I Cor. vii. 30).

Another sadness there is that is spiritual and according to God, good and profitable, and becoming the servants of God. This, St. Basil and Cassian say, is engendered in four ways, and of four things. First, of the sins that we have

committed against God, according to that saying of the Apostle: *I rejoice, not that ye have been sad, but that your sadness hath led you to repentance. Ye have been saddened according to God. The sadness that is according to God worketh repentance leading to salvation* (II Cor. vii. 9-10). An excellent sadness it is, and well according to God, for a man to bewail his sins and be sad and grieved for having offended God. St. Chrysostom gives a reason worthy of his genius. There is no loss in this world that is repaired by sorrowing, grieving, and making oneself sad over it, only the loss that comes of sin; thus in all other matters sorrowing and grieving is time thrown away, but not in this. In the case of all other losses, not only is there no remedy in bewailing and being sorry for them, but they are rather augmented and increased thereby; but the loss entailed by sin is remedied by sorrow and grief, and therefore we should bewail it.

Secondly, this sorrow is engendered and springs from the sight of the sins of others, seeing how God is offended and made light of and His law broken. This also is an excellent sorrow, taking its rise from love and zeal for the honor and glory of God and the good of souls. Thus we see those holy prophets and great friends of God worn out and consumed with this sorrow and grief at seeing the sins and offenses committed against His Majesty, evils which they are unable to remedy. *Fainting shall come over me by reason of sinners abandoning thy law* (Psalm cxviii. 53). So great was the affliction that the Prophet David felt on this account, that the grief of his soul enfeebled his body and made his blood run cold. *My zeal hath consumed me for mine enemies forgetting thy words. I saw their transgressions, and wasted away at the sight of their not keeping thy words* (Psalm cxviii. 139, 158). The blood ran cold in my body; I shuddered to see the injuries and offenses committed against God. The Prophet Jeremy is full of similar complaints and sighs. This sadness is very good for us

and very much becomes us, because the purpose of our institute is that the name of God be hallowed and glorified all the world over; and so the greater should be our sorrow to see that this is not done accordingly, but quite the reverse.

Thirdly, this sadness may spring from a desire of perfection, which means being so anxious to advance in perfection as to be ever sighing and groaning that we are not better and more perfect, according to what Christ says in the Gospel: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after virtue and perfection, for they shall have their fill* (Matt. v. 6); God will fulfil their desires.

Fourthly, there may spring up in the servants of God a holy sadness at the contemplation of the glory of heaven and desire of heavenly goods, seeing themselves in exile away from them and put off, as the children of Israel bewailed their exile in Babylon when they remembered the Land of Promise (Psalm cxxxvi. 1), and the prophet lamented his exile in this life: *Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged* (Psalm cxix. 5). Those verses of the "Salve": "To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, groaning and weeping in this vale of tears," are sighs that make sweet and pleasant music in the ears of God.

Cassian specifies the signs by which we may know what sadness is good and according to God and what is evil and of the devil. He says that the former is obedient, affable, meek, gentle, and patient; in short, as springing from the love of God, it contains in itself all the fruits of the Holy Ghost, which St. Paul enumerates, which are *charity, joy, peace, longanimity, goodness, faith, meekness, continence* (Gal. v. 22). But the evil sadness that is of the devil is rude, impatient, full of rancor and fruitless bitterness, inclining to diffidence and despair, and withdrawing and removing from all good. Moreover, this evil sadness carries with it no consolation or joy; but the sadness that is of God, says Cassian, is in a certain manner joyful, and



carries with it a certain consolation and comfort, and greatly fosters all that is good, as may be seen by running through the four sorts of sadness that we have mentioned. The very bewailing of one's sins, though on the one hand it breathes affliction and pain, is on the other exceedingly consoling. We see by experience how content and satisfied we remain when we have been heartily bewailing our sins.

One of the things that go a long way to show the great difference for the better there is between the spiritual life of the servants of God and the life of worldly people is this, that we feel greater joy and delight in our soul when we have just done weeping for our sins than worldly people feel in all the feasts and pleasures of the world. St. Augustine makes good reflection on this point. He says: If this, which is the first of the true works of one who is beginning to serve God—if this weeping of the just, if their sadness, gives them such satisfaction, what must be the joy and contentment which they will feel when the Lord consoles them in prayer and allows them some of those spiritual transports which He is wont to impart to His elect! What must it be when He altogether dries their eyes and wipes away their tears! *God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor pain shall be any more, for the things that were of old have passed away* (Apoc. xxi. 4). See, then, the life of one who has continually made of himself a Jeremias, lamenting other people's sins, what sweetness and satisfaction it raises in the soul, since it is a sign of good sons to be very jealous of the honor of their father! See, then, the life that has been spent in panting and sighing after perfection, and desires of being already in our heavenly country—what could there be sweeter and more delicious! St. Augustine says: "What more delightful state of mind than to be ever sighing after that glory and blessedness which we hope for, and to have our heart ever there where is true joy and satisfaction!"

Hence also it will be seen that the cheerfulness which we look for in the servants of God is no vain mirth of laughter and idle words, nor of witticisms and jokes, and chattering with everybody that one comes across; that would not be the cheerfulness proper to the servants of God, but distraction, foolish liberty, and dissipation. What we look for is an outward cheerfulness redounding from that which is within, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *A joyful heart makes a cheerful face* (Prov. xv. 13). As sadness of spirit redounds upon the body, drying it up and consuming it, even to the very flesh and bones—*a sad spirit drieth up the bones* (Prov. xii. 25)—so inward cheerfulness of heart redounds also upon the body and is shown in the countenance. So we read of many saints that there appeared in their face a cheerfulness and serenity which bore witness to the cheerfulness and inward peace of their soul. That is the cheerfulness that we want.

▣ FIFTEENTH TREATISE ▣

---

ON OUR TREASURES IN JESUS CHRIST







## CHAPTER I

### *Of the Treasures and Great Blessings That We Have in Christ*

**B**UT when the fulness of time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Gal. iv. 4-5). When the fulness of time was come, says the Apostle St. Paul. All other times were, so to speak, void of grace; this time is full of it and of spiritual gifts, and therefore with good reason it is called *the law of grace*, since in it there is given us that grace which is the fountain, source, and springhead of all graces. God sent His only-begotten Son made man to deliver us from sin, to redeem and rescue us from the power and servitude of the devil in which we were, to reconcile us to God, to make us His adopted sons, to open to us the gate of heaven which sin was keeping shut.

After the sad fall of our first parents, whereby they lost for themselves and for us the happy state of original justice in which God had created them, and became subject, they and all their descendants, to infinite miseries, one consolation remained to them in the midst of so many woes—it was that, immediately after Adam had sinned, God cursed the serpent and promised to give at a certain time His only-begotten Son to be made man and suffer for us, and deliver us from the evils into which we had fallen by sin. *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between her seed and thy seed, she shall crush thy head* (Gen. iii. 15). This promise consoled them much, and thereupon they did penance, and taught their children the story of the happy state they had held and how they had lost it by sin; but that there should come a Redeemer in Whose virtue they were to be saved. This promise God confirmed many times, especially to certain men who pleased Him most particu-

larly, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, promising them that of their race the Redeemer should be born. The whole religious body of Jews professed this, and the prophets spoke marvels of His coming. They waited for it with cries, groans, and prayers. *Oh, that thou wouldst break through the heavens and come down!* (Isaias lxiv. 1). *Drop down your dew, ye heavens, and let the clouds rain the Just; let earth open and bud forth a Savior* (Isaias xlv. 8). The spouse in the Canticles desired it, saying: *Oh, that thou wouldst come forth hither, being made my brother, at the breasts of my mother, that there I might kiss thee and embrace thee, and henceforth none might despise me* (Cant. viii. 1), seeing that I have God for my brother. This was all the hope of the Gentiles: *He shall be the expectation of the Gentiles* (Gen. xlix. 10). They awaited Him as captives await their delivery, and this hope sustained them, and in virtue of Him that was to come their sins were forgiven them. As we believe that He has come, so they believed that He was to come; and so they called Him, *He that is to come*. That was the question they put to St. John the Baptist: *Art thou he that is to come, or look we for another?* (Matt. xi. 3).

But when there came the fulness of time, when the hour had arrived in which God had determined to show this great mercy to the world, He sent His only-begotten Son. He would not send Him at once, that men might better recognize His mercy and desire their cure, and esteem it the more when it was given them. Oftentimes God will not give the remedy or the comfort desired at once, that we may come to see our poverty and the need we are under of having recourse to Him, and not attribute anything to ourselves. There came at last the hour, so precious and so desired, when God had determined to apply a remedy to our fall. This fall and consequent loss none could repair worthily and duly but God Himself. The forces of man were not enough for him to lift himself up; the forces of angels were

not enough to lift him up; there was need of the strength and power of God. And whereas the redemption had to be wrought out by satisfaction made for the fault, and that a painful satisfaction, and God in His substance and nature could not suffer, His infinite wisdom discovered this means and marvelous invention of the Son of God making Himself man and uniting in one and the same person both natures, divine and human; so was wrought out this portentous transaction of the redemption of mankind. It was an invention full of wisdom and goodness, a manifestation of the infinite greatness and power of God, transcending all the other works that He had done in the world. So the prophet implores: *Rouse, O Lord, thy power*, manifest Thine omnipotence, *and come to save us* (Psalm lxxix. 3). He implores Him to show His power in this coming, because it was a work of the greatest stretch of power that God could put forth in this world. So says St. Augustine: The creation of the world was a great work; the creation of so many perfect creatures was a sign of God's power; and so the Church sings: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; but compared with the redemption of the world, that work was as zero. So David calls creation the work of the fingers of God: *I contemplate thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast created* (Psalm viii. 4); but when there is question of the redemption of the human race, it is called the work of His arm. *He hath put forth might in his arm* (Luke i. 51). The difference between arm and finger is the difference of the one work from the other

Not only was this work a manifestation of the power and greatness of God, but also of the greatness of man and the value that God sets upon him, much more than the work of creation. So says the Church: "O God, Who hast wonderfully created the dignity of human nature, and still more wonderfully restored it." God did a great deal for man when He created him, but much more when He redeemed

him. Pope St. Leo says: "God raised man to a high degree of being when He created Him to His image and likeness; but He raised and ennobled him far more by making Himself, God as He was, not merely in the image and likeness of man, but true man." So many and so great are the benefits that have accrued to us from God's having made Himself man for our redemption, that in exchange for them we ought to take Adam's fault for a blessing to the world. So the Church on Holy Saturday, rapt in spirit in a transport of love, entertaining and delighting herself in Christ her Spouse, sings: "O happy evil, by which so great good has come to men! O happy infirmity, that has been cured by such a medicine!" More has been given to us by Christ than has been taken away from us by Adam. Greater is the gain of the redemption than the loss of the fall. *Not as was the offense hath been the gift*, says the Apostle St. Paul (Rom. v. 15), considering that the grace which Christ has imparted to the world is greater than the loss caused to it by the sin of Adam. And St. Bernard, alleging this testimony of St. Paul, says: "Much mischief did one man and one woman do to us; but infinite thanks be given to God for that by means of another man and another woman, Christ and the Virgin, not only has that mischief been repaired, but repaired to great advantage, since the greatness of the benefit and the gift given us infinitely exceeds the harm done us."

It is impossible to enumerate or say the great benefits and treasures that we have in Christ. The Apostle St. Paul says that the Lord had given him this grace of preaching and declaring to the Gentiles these inestimable riches and treasures (Eph. iii. 8). This grace we needed just now. Christ Himself said to the Samaritan woman: *O woman, if thou didst know the gift of God!* (John iv. 10), the blessing that He has given to the world. This so signal gift that He promised to give in this His Son, He has now given. This gift well deserves the name of gift, since in it are con-



tained all the gifts of God. *With him He hath given us all things* (Rom. viii. 2). Oh, if we knew and understood this gift and the great blessings that we have therein! Oh, if the Lord would open to us this vein and discover to us this mine, this so excellent treasure! How rich we should become! How happy should we be! God had done this favor to St. Augustine, and so he said: "Lord, he who will not serve Thee for the benefit of creation well deserves hell, but a new hell should be prepared for him who will not serve Thee for that of redemption."

It is told of Father Master Avila that he was so full of this thought that, when anyone wondered at any favor that the Lord had done him, he used to say: "Do not wonder at that, but wonder and be amazed that God has so loved you as to become man for your sake." *God hath so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son* (John ii. 16). The Apostle and Evangelist St. John knew not how to utter or set forth the height of the degree of love that God has shown us otherwise than by taking the height of the love as being in proportion to the gift. By the sovereign excellence of the gift that He has given us, you will see the love that He bore us. The love was as great as the gift was great; now God has loved the world so much as to give His only-begotten Son to be made man, that by His death we might live. "O marvelous love," sings the Church; "O inestimable charity, that Thou didst give up Thine only-begotten Son to redeem a slave!" Who could imagine such a thing! What captive among the Moors in Barbary would dare to petition his king: "Sire, send hither thy only son to come to die among these infidels to ransom me"? But what you would not dare to open your mouth on, what you could not think or imagine, what could never enter your mind, that God has done for you.

Furthermore, not only has He delivered us from the captivity in which we lay, but He has raised us to the dignity of sons of God. He has taken our nature to make us par-

takers of His; God has become man to make us sons of God. *See what love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called and be sons of God*, says St. John (I John iii. 1; Gal. iv. 5). See the charity and bounty of the Lord and the great favor that He has done us, in that we not only call ourselves sons of God, but in reality are so; with truth we call God *Father*, and Jesus Christ His Son *Brother*. Thus He does not disdain, St. Paul says (Heb. ii. 11), to hold us for His brethren and call us so, but it looks as though He prided Himself on it. Many times does He use this term, and openly call us His brethren (John xx. 17). But whoever has God for Father, and Jesus Christ for Brother, in Whose hands is *all power in heaven and on earth* (Matt. xxviii. 18), what more is there for him to desire? When the brethren of Joseph saw their brother enthroned in Egypt, and having command over all the land, and that Pharaoh dispatched all affairs through him, and Joseph had removed the fear they felt for the offense they had given him, how joyful, how contented, how confident they were! *Come with me, and I will give you all the good things of Egypt* (Gen. xlv. 18). Now that is what Christ our Redeemer does for us, seeing that He is our Brother and loves us more than Joseph did his brethren; He wishes to take us all with Him. He says by St. John (xvii. 24): *Father, them that thou hast given me, I would that where I am, they also should be with me*. He gives us chariots to go there, in the many sacraments and gratuitous bounties that we have given us for that end.

And if they put before you the offenses and sins that you have committed against Him, to fill you with distrust and discouragement, by this time He has forgotten them for the penance you have done. And not only that, but He Himself is our advocate and intercessor with His eternal Father, to obtain for us mercy and pardon. The Apostle and Evangelist St. John encourages us with this reflection. *My children, sin not; but if anyone hath sinned, let him not*

lose confidence, since we have for advocate before the Father, Jesus Christ his Son (I John ii. 1). And the Apostle St. Paul says that Christ has ascended to heaven to do the office of advocate and agent on our behalf in the court of the Father (Heb. ix. 24). St. Bernard says that He is there in heaven showing and presenting to the eternal Father His wounds, saying that it is for us that He received them and at His command, and begging Him not to let that be lost which has cost Him so dear. As the most holy Queen of Angels shows her ever-blessed Son the breasts which gave Him suck, interceding for us; so the Son shows the eternal Father the wounds and blows that He received for us. And the saints say that that was one of the reasons why He would have it that the marks and openings of those wounds should remain after His glorious Resurrection.

When Jacob died, Holy Writ says that his sons were afraid of their brother Joseph, lest he might then take occasion to avenge upon them the injuries for which he had taken no vengeance in the lifetime of his father. And they said to him: "Our father at the hour of his death desired no greater good for his children than that their brother would pardon them, and forget past wrongs: *we also pray thee to forgive this iniquity to the servant of God thy father*" (Gen. l. 17). It is much to be observed that it was not their father who had done those wrongs, but his paternal love made the errors of his sons his own. So Christ our Redeemer, for the great love He bears us, makes our errors and sins His own, charging Himself with them and becoming our surety. *The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all: the iniquities of us all he shall bear*, says Isaias (liii. 6, 11). Let us, then, go with this same embassy and petition to the eternal Father, and say: "Eternal Father, pardon these my sins to Thy Son Jesus Christ, Who left nothing more earnestly commended than this in the hour of His death: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*" (Luke xxiii. 34). Under this plea who can doubt of being pardoned?

*Ye have drawn nigh to the sprinkling of the blood that speaketh better than that of Abel*, says the Apostle St. Paul (Heb. xii. 24). Abel's blood cried for vengeance, but the blood of Christ cries for mercy upon those for whom it was shed and even those very persons who shed it. When, then, the devil shall put before you the multitude of your sins and miseries to make you lose heart and despair, fix your eyes on Jesus Christ; imagine that He takes you therewith by the hand and presents you to His Father and answers and pleads for you as your advocate and agent; that He covers your confusion and shame with the merits and services that He has rendered to His Father, and thereby you shall take heart again and your discouragement shall be exchanged for hope and your sorrow for joy, since He is *our justice, sanctification, and redemption*, as the Apostle says (I Cor. i. 30).

St. Ambrose says: "We have all things in Christ, and Christ is all things to us—*Omnia habemus in Christo, et omnia Christus est nobis*. If you desire to be cured of your wounds, He is a physician; if you are in a burning fever, He is a fountain; if you are wearied under the burden of sin, He is righteousness; if you are in need of assistance, He is strength; if you fear death, He is life; if you desire heaven, He is the way thither; if you wish to avoid darkness, He is light; if you are in need of food, He is sustenance. All that you can desire and have need of, you will find in Him." And in another place he says: "If the wolf comes out against you, take the stone, which is Christ. If you have recourse to Him, the wolf will fly and not be able to frighten you, much less harm you. St. Peter had recourse to this stone when he began to be afraid in the midst of the waves, and at once he found what he sought, for Christ took him by the hand and delivered him from the danger." St. Jerome on that passage of St. Paul: *Brethren, henceforth be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; and put ye on the armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand the*



*snakes and temptations of the devil* (Eph. vi. 10), says that from what follows and from the whole tenor of Holy Scripture, speaking of Christ our Redeemer, we gather clearly that the whole armor of God which the Apostle here bids us put on, is Christ our Redeemer. Thus it is the same thing to say, *Put ye on the armor of God*, and to say, *Put ye on Jesus Christ*. And he goes on to prove how Christ is our breastplate and our helmet, our coat of mail and our shield, and our two-edged sword, and all the rest. Thus the armor that we have to put on and arm ourselves withal in order to resist all the temptations of the devil, and defend ourselves against all his deceits and ambushes, and come out victorious, is the power of Christ. Christ is all things to us, and we have all things in Him.

For the better understanding of this, Holy Scripture attributes to Him innumerable names and titles—King, Master, Shepherd, Priest, Friend, Father, Brother, Spouse, Light, Life, Fountain, and the like. And as the Apostle says that *in Him are locked up all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of the Father* (Col. ii. 3), so also in Him are locked up all our treasures and riches, since in Him is the warrant for all our good and remedy for all our ills. As for all our good works, if they have any merit, it is on His account. Their value comes of their being dyed in His blood, as was told to St. John in the Apocalypse, of that so great multitude which he saw standing before the throne of God, a multitude that no man could number, clothed in white and shining robes and with palms in their hands. *These are they that have washed their robes, and have dyed them white in the blood of the Lamb* (Apoc. vii. 14). All our good things are, as it were, scraps and fragments of the riches of Christ; all the boons and blessings that come to us come through His merits; by Him we are delivered from all temptations and dangers; by Him we gain all virtues: in short, we have all things in Christ, we should gain all for Christ, and we should attribute all to

Christ. So the Church terminates and concludes all her prayers and petitions by saying, *per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum*, in accordance with that text of the prophet: *Look down, O God our Protector, and cast thine eyes upon the face of thy Christ* (Psalm lxxxiii. 10); pardon our sins for the love Thou bearest Him, since He has died for them on a cross; cast Thine eyes on the wounds that He has suffered for us, and have mercy on us.

If the services of Abraham, Jacob, and David were enough in the estimation of God to appease Him and hold His hand, so as to prevent Him from punishing His people—and not only that, but to make Him confer many favors and blessings on His people for their sakes, as we see that the Lord said repeatedly, *for the sake of David my servant* (Isaias xlv. 4; IV Kings xix. 34)—how much more will the eternal Father not do for the sake of Jesus Christ His Son, *in whom He is so well pleased* (Matt. xvii. 5). So says the Apostle St. Paul: *He hath given us grace in his beloved Son* (Eph. i. 6). And Christ Himself says and assures us that anything whatsoever that we ask the Father in His name shall be done, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. *Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son* (John xiv. 13).

Oh, what good reason had the angel to say to the shepherds on the night that the Lord was born, and in them to us: *Lo, I bring you tidings of great joy, for this day is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord* (Luke ii. 10-11). This is not one joy, but many joys and many good things. Isaias says in the singular, *of him that bringeth tidings of good* (Isaias lii. 7); while St. Paul quotes the passage in the plural, *of them that bring tidings of good things* (Rom. x. 15). Origen asks the reason of this difference, and says it is because Jesus Christ is not only one good thing, but all good things. He is our salvation, our life, our resurrection, light of the world, truth, way, gate of heaven, wisdom, power, and treasury of all good things;

for us He was born and died, that we might live; for us He rose again, that we might rise again; for us He ascended into heaven—*I go to prepare you a place, and it is expedient for you that I go* (John xiv. 2; xvi. 7). From thence He sent us the Holy Ghost; and there He is at the right hand of the Father, doing us continual favors and benefits. St. Cyprian says that He left open the openings of His wounds, to show that they remained as channels and fountains, streaming with treasures and graces, and so they go on streaming forever with the utmost liberality, and never can run dry. He has hands of gold, full of precious stones (Cant. v. 14); and as He is generous to a degree, His gifts find their way out by those openings. Conclude we, then, with the conclusion that St. Paul draws: *Having, then, a high priest and mediator so great as Jesus Christ, Son of God, who hath penetrated the heavens, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and is equal to Him, let us go with great confidence to the throne of His grace, that we may gain mercy and favor in all our needs* (Heb. iv. 14, 16).

Of the blessed St. Bernard we read in the story of his life that, in a severe illness which he had, he was transported out of himself, and being in a kind of ecstasy he thought they carried him before the tribunal of God, and that there the devil accused him and laid his charges against him, saying that he deserved not the glory of heaven. The saint answered: "I confess that I am not worthy of eternal glory, but my Lord Jesus Christ is worthy of it, and possesses heaven on two titles: the one, because He is the only-begotten Son of God and heir to the heavenly kingdom; the other, because He has bought it with His blood, by His obedience to His Father even unto death. He is content with the former of these two titles, and that by itself is sufficient for Him. He makes a present of the latter to me, and in virtue of that I hold my right to heaven; on that I take my stand and am confident." Whereupon the malicious accuser stood abashed,

the apparatus of judge and tribunal disappeared, and the saint returned to himself. In this, then, we should place our confidence; this should be all our hope. Jacob, clad in the garments of his elder brother, gained the blessing of his father. Let us clothe ourselves in Jesus Christ, our elder Brother; let us cover ourselves with the fell of this immaculate Lamb; let us avail ourselves of His merits and Passion, and in that way we shall gain the blessing of the eternal Father.

## CHAPTER II

### *How Profitable and Pleasing to God Is Meditation on the Passion of Christ Our Redeemer*

THE blessed St. Augustine says: "There is nothing so wholesome and profitable for us as the daily thought and consideration of what the Son of God has suffered on our account." And St. Bernard: "There is nothing so efficacious for the healing of the wounds of our conscience and the purification and perfection of our soul as frequent and continued meditation on the wounds of Christ and on His death and Passion." For all temptations, and especially for those against purity, the saints say that the remedy of remedies is to have recourse to the thought of the Passion of Christ, and hide ourselves in His wounds. In short, we shall find in the Passion of Christ a universal remedy and aid. St. Augustine says: "In all circumstances I have found no remedy so efficacious as this." And St. Bonaventure: "He who exercises himself devoutly on the most holy life and Passion of the Lord will find there abundantly all that he requires and have no need to seek anything beyond Jesus." So we see that the saints and servants of God have practised this exercise continually, and have thereby arrived at great holiness and perfection.



Though there were nothing else in this exercise beyond merely remembering God and calling to mind the benefits that we have received at His hand, it would be a thing very precious and valuable in the eyes of the Lord. It is the way of love to make the lover desire and set great store by the loved one's often remembering him, and thinking frequently of the kindnesses that he has received from him, and often speaking of the same. Whoever loves in earnest is much more pleased and delighted at this than he would be if the person he loves were to send him many presents and gifts out of his property. Let us take the case of a mother, a lady of high station and wealth, who bears a great love to her absent son. Let her be told that the boy remembers her and often refers to her, that he is continually talking of the comforts in which she reared him, and of the benefits and kind turns which she has ever done him and the labors she has undergone for him, and she will value this more and take more delight and satisfaction in hearing this of her boy than if he sent her many pieces of silk and trinkets of gold without remembering her in any such way. In like manner, then, God our Lord, Who in all other things observes the proprieties and laws of love, observes them in this also, which is a propriety of lovers who love deeply. So He desires, and sets great store by it, that we should ever remember Him and think of Him and of the benefits and marvels that He has wrought for us—especially seeing that, if we exercise ourselves in the memory of these benefits, before long they will awaken in our hearts a desire of serving the Lord earnestly for them.

Blosius relates of the holy virgin Gertrude that she learned from the Lord that every time that one looks with devotion at a figure of Christ crucified, he himself is looked upon with mercy by the most bounteous mercy of God. Let us, then, at least gather this lesson, that, as He did not take it amiss to suffer for our love, so we should not take it amiss to remember what He has suffered for us. It is

related of St. Francis that once, when he was going to Our Lady of Portiuncula hard by, weeping and lamenting with loud cries, a man happened to pass that way, a servant of God who knew him; he, seeing the saint so sad and tearful, thought that he had met with some misfortune and trouble, and went up to him and asked him what it was that occasioned his grief. The saint answered with many tears and sobs: "I am grieving and weeping for the great torments and pains which they gave my Lord Jesus Christ, so entirely without fault of His, and to see how we men forget such a high favor, though it is we who have been the cause of His suffering."

### CHAPTER III

#### *Of the Method to Be Followed in Meditating the Passion of Christ Our Redeemer, and of the Sentiment of Compassion Which We Should Draw from Thence*

**T**HE way to meditate the Passion of Christ our Redeemer is the same that the masters of spirit commonly teach for the practice of meditation. They advise us not to occupy ourselves entirely in meditation and discursive reasoning on the history, but mainly to move our will to sentiments and desires. These are formed first in the heart, that afterwards in due time they may issue in action. This is that on which we should stay and lay stress in meditation. As he who digs to find water or discover a treasure, uses his spade no more when he finds what he was seeking; so, when by meditation and consideration of the understanding you have discovered the gold and treasure of truth and affection that you sought, you must dig no more with the understanding, now that you have come to the living water that your soul desired and thirsted for, but rest on those affections and desires of the will until you have drunk your fill of that water, and quenched your thirst and are quite

satisfied. This is the end aimed at in meditation and the fruit that we should draw from it, and to this all the meditations and considerations and reflections of the understanding should be ordered and directed. This, then, is the method that we should observe in meditating the Passion of Christ our Redeemer. We will proceed to name the sentiments which should follow from this meditation, noting at the same time certain considerations to awaken them in us.

Many are the sentiments in which we may occupy ourselves and spend our time most profitably, but authors generally reduce them to seven kinds or manners of affections. The first is compassion. To compassionate is to receive pain from another's pain and grief from his grief, keeping company with him in his afflictions with feeling and inward tears, whereby one seems to share the affliction and grief. The suffering is alleviated, and the pain and affliction diminished, by my taking compassion on it, as, contrariwise, when another is in glee at our misfortune and trouble, and laughs and makes game of it, our trouble and grief is increased and we feel it more. Now it is true that we cannot in this way lessen the griefs and afflictions of Christ, because they are things of the past; nevertheless our compassion is very agreeable to Him because thereby in a certain way we make His griefs and afflictions ours. So says the Apostle Paul: *If we are sons, we are heirs also, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, yet so that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him* (Rom. viii. 17). If we take and transfuse into ourselves the pains of Christ by compassion with Him, we shall be heirs of His glory along with Him.

To awaken in ourselves this sentiment of compassion, it will be a help to consider the intensity of the griefs, pains, and torments that Christ our Redeemer bore. As theologians and saints say, they were greater than have been suffered or could be suffered in this life, according to

that text of Jeremy (Lam. i. 12) : *O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.* First of all, in His body there was no part that did not suffer most grievous pains and torments. *From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there is no soundness in him,* says Isaias (i. 6). His feet and hands were nailed, His head pierced with a crown of thorns, His face disfigured with spittle and wounded with blows, His whole body torn with scourges and racked by the torment of the Cross. *They have numbered all my bones* (Psalm xxi. 18).

Not only was there pain in His body, but also in His soul. For though the human nature was united with the divine Person, nevertheless He felt the bitterness of His Passion as though there were no such union. Moreover, for the increase of His pain He chose to go without any consolation. That is what He said on the Cross: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* (Matt. xxvii. 46). The holy martyrs in their torments were refreshed by a heavenly and divine consolation, which made them suffer them not only with courage, but even with joy; but Christ our Redeemer, to suffer more for our love, shut the gates all round against all manner of alleviation and consolation, whether from heaven or from earth, as regards the lower portion of His nature. He was forsaken, not only by friends and disciples, but also by His own Father. *He was made as a man without aid or helper,* while all the time He *alone among the dead* was free from sin, and from any deserving of death or pain (Psalm lxxxvii. 5-6). We may get a sufficient inkling of the greatness of Christ's sufferings from the fact that the mere imagination and thought of them in the Garden made Him sweat a sweat of blood so copious and abundant that it ran down on to the earth. What, then, must the utmost suffering have been, when the mere thought of it caused in Him such pain and agony! In short, so great and so severe were His pains and sufferings that the saints say that no mortal man could live under



them without his life's being miraculously preserved, and so it was necessary for Christ to avail Himself of His divinity not to die under them. But this is what the divinity did there, not to prevent His feeling His sufferings, but to prevent the excessive pain that He felt from putting an end to His life, that so He might suffer more. Hence we may also consider and reflect upon the mercy and liberality of the Lord, that, while He wrought miracles for His holy martyrs that they might not feel their torments, in Himself He wrought them only that He might suffer and feel them more for our love.

Besides outward pains, which tormented His body and tormented His soul at the same time, as we have said, He had others, inward pains, which tormented immediately His most holy soul, and they were much greater than the former. From the instant of His conception to the moment of His death, He had ever present all the sins of men committed from the beginning of the world and all those that were to be committed until the end thereof. Now on the one hand He loved God extremely, and saw that these were injuries and offenses committed against God. On the other hand He loved souls extremely and saw how great would be the loss and perdition of them. While He offered His Passion and death for their salvation, He knew nevertheless that such a countless multitude of souls were not to profit thereby, but would seek death rather than life. This consideration wounded Him like a two-edged sword, on the one side for the offense of God, on the other for the loss and damnation of souls. The incomparable sorrows which His most holy soul felt at this are beyond utterance or thought. All this, added to the torments, pains, and affronts which He represented to Himself in the prayer in the Garden, made Him sweat blood in such abundance that it ran down upon the earth. And all other things which He suffered in His life, from the instant of His conception till he expired on the Cross, He had ever before His eyes,

according to the saying of the prophet: *And my grief is ever in my sight* (Psalm xxxvii. 18). Hence we may conclude that all His life was like the day of His Passion. Sometimes the looking forward to adversity and affliction occasions greater pain and torment than the actual enduring of it. Hence we may conclude that His whole life was a sea of immense sufferings which incessantly night and day without measure tormented His most holy soul.

Thus whoever will consider and weigh these things in detail, considering moreover that He who suffers them is the very Son of God and that He suffers for us and for our love, must have a heart harder than stone if he is not moved to compassion. So says St. Bernard: "The earth trembles, the rocks are rent, the tombs are opened, the veil of the Temple is torn, the sun and moon are darkened—good reason surely why we should be struck with compassion at what the Lord has suffered for us." It is not reasonable that we should be harder than the rocks and more insensible than irrational creatures. *My son Absalom, Absalom my son, who will grant me to die for thee!* (II Kings xviii. 33). So said King David, feeling the death of the son who died for rising up against him and driving him out of his kingdom. With how much better reason shall we use such language, feeling for the death of the Son of God, Who died to deliver us from the captivity of the devil and give us the kingdom of His eternal Father!

#### CHAPTER IV

##### *Of the Sentiment of Sorrow and Contrition for Our Sins, Which We Should Gather from the Meditation on the Passion of Christ Our Lord*

THE second sentiment in which we should exercise ourselves, and strive to gather it from meditation on the Lord's Passion, is sorrow and contrition for our sins. This

is one of the most proper fruits that we can gather therefrom, clearly showing us the gravity and malice of sin. By considering the remedy our eyes are opened and we come to see the grave nature of the malady. "O man," says St. Bernard, "know and understand the severity of the wound that needed so costly an appliance for its cure." There is nothing that sets off the gravity of sin—though there comes in here the consideration of the hell that is due to it for ever and ever—so much as the need there was of God's becoming man to pay the debt of so great an evil. In no other way could that debt be paid or satisfaction made in rigor of strict justice, with no infringement or abatement of the justice of God. Since the offense was in a certain manner infinite, as being committed against an infinite God, and no mere man could satisfy for it, by reason of the great distance there is between God and mere man, it was necessary that he who was to make satisfaction should be a person of infinite dignity, equal to Him who had been injured and offended, and as good as He.

Theologians explain this by a comparison. If a shepherd or laborer, a common man and one of low degree, should give blows with a cudgel or with his fist to the king, it is clear that the king would not be satisfied with having other such blows of cudgel or fist given to the shepherd, not even if they gave him two hundred lashes, or even drowned him, for the vast difference of rank there is between a blow or insult offered to the king and the striking or putting to death of a shepherd. How, then, could that king get satisfaction? Do you know how? If the offender were or were made a king as great as he, and then offered him satisfaction, with that the king would be satisfied. Now so it is in this case. Vile man, base and insignificant creature, dust and ashes, had offended and insulted the King of Heaven and Glory; he had, as we have said, struck God with his fist; for that is what a man does, so far as in him lies, when he commits a mortal sin. It would

be no atonement for such an insult, though that base and vile creature were to die for it. How, then, shall atonement be made? If this man were God, equal to Him to Whom the insult has been offered, atonement would be made for the insult by the suffering of such a man. But what remedy is that, seeing that there is no other God, there being no more than one sole true God? Here came in the infinite mercy of God, and the marvelous invention and contrivance that He found, to be able to pardon man without prejudice to His own justice. Being Himself the person offended, and there being no other God that could make satisfaction, God became man that so man might suffer and die, since man it was that had offended and insulted God. That offense and fault having been in a manner infinite, it was requisite that the suffering offered in atonement for it should be of infinite value, which it could only be on condition that the sufferer himself should be God. The works of such a sufferer would be of infinite value, as being the works of an infinite God. Such was the necessity of the Incarnation and Passion of Christ. It well sets out the gravity and malice of sin. So St. John Damascene says that, if for sin God had cast into hell for ever and ever the whole multitude of men that the world has held and shall hold till it comes to an end, divine justice would not have been satisfied and paid as it has been by God's becoming man and dying. This is no hyperbole, no exaggeration, but quite plain truth. All hell and all torments that could be endured there are not a payment equal to the life and death of Christ. By that, as He was God Who made the payment, justice was entirely satisfied to the extent of the whole debt, and even more. But in hell atonement could never be complete for one single [mortal] sin.

According to this I say that one of the chief fruits that we should gather from meditation on the Passion should be greatly to bewail and abhor our sins, that have cost Jesus Christ so much. My sins, O Lord, have been the cause of



these thorns and scourges; I, Lord, have imposed these labors on Thee. This Cross, O Lord, is what I deserved; it is I that should have been spat upon, scourged, and mocked. St. Bernard gives a consideration very pat to our purpose here. I was playing in the square with my companions, and there in the privy council chamber of the king sentence of death was passed upon me. The king's only son, hearing this, took the crown off his head, stripped himself of his royal robes, put on sackcloth, covered his head with ashes, and went barefoot, weeping and lamenting that they had condemned to death his servant. Of a sudden I saw him coming out into the street in this guise. I asked the reason, and was told that he was going to die in my stead. What would be the right thing to do in such a case? Who would be so giddy, so ill-mannered, as to go back to his game, and not at least join the prince's company and weep along with him? In this way, then, with these and like reflections we should occupy ourselves in prayer, weeping and grieving for our sins, which have been the cause of the Passion of Christ. So our Father in the Book of Spiritual Exercises, coming to the exercises on the Passion, puts this for the thing to ask for: "Grief and deep feeling of confusion for that on account of my sins Christ has suffered so much." The thing that our Father bids us to ask for in the prelude to any exercise always represents the fruit which he wishes us to gather from thence.

This exercise of sorrow for sin is much recommended to us by the saints. They would not have us forget it, but use it and practise it much, beginners as well as proficients, for the great advantages that it carries. The first advantage is that such an exercise goes far to preserve us in humility and fear of God. One of the strongest and most efficacious motives that we can apply to keep us ever in humility and self-abasement is the consideration of our sins and heartfelt sorrow for them. A man who has offended His Creator and Lord, and so has deserved to be in hell for

ever and ever, what ignominies, what insults, what contempt will he not take in good part, as compensation and satisfaction for the offenses that he has committed against the majesty of God!

Secondly, this is an exercise that carries with it a great assurance of pardon. One of the reflections that go furthest to satisfy a man that God has forgiven his sins, is his having great sorrow and repentance for them. If you keep your sins before your eyes, moving yourself to sorrow and shame for them, God will not look at them, but forget them. That is why the saints kept up such a remembrance of their sins and had them ever before their eyes (*for I know mine iniquity, and my sin is always before me*), that so God may forget them and remove His eyes from them. *Turn away thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities* (Psalm l. 11). So St. Jerome on those words observes: "If you keep your sin before you, God will not keep it before Him." There is nothing that so turns away God's eyes from our sins as our keeping our own eyes on them and entering into sentiments of shame and confusion for them. This is one of the things that will give us the greatest sense of security and satisfaction at the hour of death, and to that end we should have it well prepared beforehand.

In the third place, this is not only a remedy for past sins, but a good preservative medicine to keep us from falling into sin in future. Anyone who is continually blushing and grieving for having offended God is very far from being likely to sin anew.

Fourthly, it is a powerful means to console and assure us that we have given no consent under the temptations and scruples that trouble us. He who goes on making acts of contrition, greatly abhorring sin, and firmly purposing to die rather than commit a mortal sin, may be sure that he has not given any consent under the temptations and scruples that come to him. A man does not consent so easily

to what he so greatly abhors. Moreover, to persevere in this practice is to persevere in the practice of love of God, since true contrition takes its rise from love of God, it being a sorrow for having offended a Lord so good and so worthy of our love and service. The more one knows and loves God, the more one grieves for having offended Him. St. Clement relates of the glorious Apostle St. Peter that at the recollection of his having denied Christ he wept so much that the tears burned his face and made furrows down his cheeks. At the first cockcrow he arose every night to prayer, and slept no more all that night; and this custom he kept up all his life. That is what we should imitate. One of the most profitable exercises that we can practise in meditation and out of meditation is to make acts of contrition, of utter abhorrence of sin, of firm purpose to lose a thousand lives rather than commit one mortal sin, and earnestly beseeching the Lord to take us away rather than permit such a thing. Never permit me, O Lord, to be separated from Thee! What do I want with life, O Lord, but to serve Thee! If I am not to serve Thee, I have no use for it; take me away, O Lord, ere ever I offend Thee!

## CHAPTER V

### *Of the Sentiment of Love of God*

THE third sentiment that we should excite and call forth from meditation on the mysteries of the Passion is the love of God. There is nothing that moves us more to love than to see ourselves loved; there are no irons nor chains that bind a man hand and foot so fast as that. The soul considering and pondering very leisurely and attentively the sovereign love of Christ, which shines out so much here, must be inflamed and set on fire with the love of Him Who has loved her so much. The Apostle and Evangelist St. John says: *In this the love of God hath appeared in our*

*regard, that God hath sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we may live by him* (I John iv. 9). And the Evangelist St. Luke, on account of the greatness of this love, calls it an excess of love. When the Lord was transfigured in presence of His three disciples, he says that there appeared there Elias and Moses, and they spoke of *the excess that he was to accomplish in Jerusalem*, the excess that was of His Passion and death. With great reason did he call it an excess of love. On one account, because He died for His enemies. It is great love that goes the length of giving one's life for one's friends, so much so that the Savior of the world says that no greater love can be shown than that. *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (John xv. 13). But the love of the Son of God for us has gone beyond that, going so far as to lay it down for His enemies. So says the Apostle St. Paul: *What most commendeth God's love for us is this, that when we were sinners, Christ died for us* (Rom. v. 8-9).

Secondly, he calls it an excess of love because one single drop of the blood that He shed in His circumcision or in His sweat of blood in the Garden, and the least work that He ever did for our redemption, was enough as a most just atonement, in strict rigor of justice, for all the world and for a thousand worlds, as the saints say, because it was a work of infinite value for being the work of an infinite God. But His infinite bounty and mercy was not content with that, but would give all His blood and His life for us. So the Apostle St. Paul calls it *an excessive love—nimiam caritatem* (Eph. ii. 4), as being a love infinitely exceeding all possible utterance and thought. And the Prophet Zachary, father of the glorious Baptist, speaking of this benefit, was not content with saying that it proceeded from the mercy of God, but went so far as to say that it proceeded from the *heart of His mercy*, and the innermost heart at that—*per viscera misericordiae* (Luke i. 78).



Who, then, will not love One Who has loved him so much? So the Beloved Disciple: *Let us then love God, because God hath loved us first* (I John iv. 19). Let us answer at least by a return of love and take care to show our love in the way in which He has shown His to us, that is, by deeds that cost us much, for in such is love best discovered and brought to light. So St. Ambrose says: "I owe Thee more, O Lord, for what Thou hast done in redeeming me than for what Thou hast done in creating me." Creation was a great benefit, but after all it cost Thee no labor; all that Thou hadst to do was to speak, and the thing was done. *He spoke, and things were made; he commanded, and they were created* (Psalm cxlviii. 5). But redemption cost Him more than a word; it cost Him His blood and His life. Let us, then, show the love we bear Him, not in words, but in deeds. *Little children, let us love not in word or lips, but in deed and truth*, says St. John (I John iii. 18). The Son of God has shown us the love He bore us by being despised and brought low for our sake; let us show Him the love we bear Him by desiring to be despised and made small account of for His sake, and rejoicing when any occasion of humiliation and mortification offers itself. He showed us the love He bore us by offering Himself entirely in sacrifice to the eternal Father on the Cross, leaving nothing unsacrificed, but giving all for our love. Let us also show the love that we bear Him by offering ourselves and making ourselves over to Him entirely, giving Him our whole heart, desiring that His will and not our will be done in us in all things. In this is shown love, not in words or lip-worship, saying: "Lord, I love Thee much." So the saints explain the saying of St. James: *Patience hath a perfect work* (i. 4), since he who embraces and takes well labor, mortification, and humiliation bears witness that the love he feels is not a prating love, but a working, genuine love, failing not in time of temptation and tribulation, which is the time in which true friends are proved.

This is one of the chiefest fruits that we are to try and gather from meditation on the Passion. We should try to work this well in meditation, particularly by offering ourselves entirely and with our whole heart to God to do with us what He likes, as He likes, when He likes, and in such fashion as He likes, descending herein to particular difficult cases that may occur, leaving out no place or office or station, however mean and lowly it be, to which we do not offer ourselves for His love. This is an exercise of great profit and very high perfection, and a great sign of genuine love.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Of the Sentiment of Gratitude and Thanksgiving*

THE fourth sentiment that we should excite in prayer and meditation on the Passion is that of thanksgiving. St. Augustine says: "What better thing can we have in our mind, utter with our lips, write with our pen than *Deo gratias*? Nothing can be shorter to say, more joyful to hear, more lofty to understand, more profitable to do than this." God sets such store by this gratitude and giving of thanks that, whenever He did any singular favor to His people, He at once required them to sing Him a song of praise. *Immolate to the Lord a sacrifice of praise* (Psalm xlix. 14). Scripture we find full of the canticles that the saints and children of Israel composed in thanksgiving for the benefits they had received at the hand of the Lord. St. Jerome says that it was a tradition of the Hebrews that the sickness which befell King Ezechias and brought him to the gates of death was because, on occasion of that so signal and miraculous victory which God had given him over the Assyrians, when the angel of the Lord slew one hundred and eighty thousand of them in one night, he had not sung to God a song of praise as others had been wont to do for

similar favors. Speaking of the ten lepers whom Christ healed, St. Augustine well reflects how the Redeemer of the world praised the one who returned to give thanks for the benefit received and blamed the rest who had been ungrateful and thankless. *Were not ten made clean? And where are the nine? There is none found to return and give glory to God but this stranger* (Luke xvii. 17-18). Let us, then, not be ungrateful for the benefits that we have received at the hand of God, and especially for this greatest of benefits, that He has made Himself man and laid Himself on the Cross for us. *Forget not the benefit done thee by thy surety, for he has given his life for thee*, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. xxix. 19). Christ came forward as our surety and made payment on our behalf, giving His lifeblood for that purpose; it is reasonable that we should not forget so great a boon and blessing, but be grateful for it.

St. Thomas, treating of gratitude, says that thanks may be paid in three ways: first, interiorly in the heart, recognizing and esteeming the greatness of the benefit and holding oneself much bounden to the benefactor; secondly, by praising and thanking him in words; thirdly, by recompensing the benefit in deeds according to the capacity of the recipient. In all these ways we ought to practise thanksgiving for every mystery of the Passion. First, by recognizing in our heart the greatness of such many excellent benefits as are contained in every mystery and esteeming them much, studying in detail all the circumstances and all the blessings that thereby have come to us and shall come to us for eternity, and acknowledging and confessing our obligation to make perpetual return for them with all our strength. Secondly, by praising and glorifying God also with our lips and desiring that all creation should aid us in praising Him and thanking Him for them, according to St. Paul: *Through him, therefore, let us offer a sacrifice of praise ever to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing to*

*his name* (Heb. xiii. 15). Thirdly, by endeavoring to correspond in deeds to such benefits, offering and resigning to Him our whole heart.

St. Bernard says that on every mystery that we consider we should make account that Christ our Redeemer speaks to us those words which He said to His disciples after having washed their feet: *Do ye know what I have done for you?* (John xiii. 12). Do you understand this mystery? Do you understand this benefit of creation, of redemption, of vocation? Oh, how far are we from knowing or understanding what God has done for us! For if I did know and seriously reflect that Thou, O Lord, God as Thou art, hast become man for me, and laid Thyself on a cross for me, there would be need of no other motive for me to melt away in Thy love and give over to Thee my whole heart. That would be true gratitude.

Here St. Chrysostom makes a very profitable observation. He says that it is the affection and sentiment of a faithful servant to esteem and be grateful for the Lord's benefits that are common to all as though they were done to himself alone, and he alone were indebted for them and obliged to make a return for them all. So did the Apostle St. Paul, when he said: *Who hath loved me, and given himself up for me* (Gal. ii. 20). He had good reason for saying this, and we may say the same, says St. Chrysostom, since the benefit does as much good to me as if it had been conferred on me alone. The sun's light lights my path as much as if it lit mine alone, and its giving light to others is no diminution of the gift to me, but rather an increase, since in lighting the way for others it gives me company to aid and comfort me and do me good. So God's having become man and suffered death on the Cross is as beneficial to me as if it had been done for me only; its profiting others is no diminution of my profit, but rather a great increase, since it gives me companions to love me and cheer me and aid me to merit and increase my glory in heaven.



Furthermore, the love of God for each one is as great as if He had him alone to love, and no one else. So far as Christ's will and love went, He was willing to suffer and work these mysteries for each one, if it were necessary, as for all. In fact, says St. Chrysostom, Christ's love was so great that He would not have refused to do for one individual what He did for the whole world. Moreover, it is true that God bore us in mind individually and had me present before His eyes when He made Himself man and when He died on the Cross. *I have loved thee with perpetual love* (Jer. xxxi. 3). He counted the cost of His death well spent to give me life. Thus each one should consider the mysteries and benefits of the Lord as though they had been wrought for him alone. The love, also, which gave rise to the benefit should be regarded by each one as though he had been the only object of God's love. Each should say with St. Paul: *He hath loved me and given himself up to death for me*. Considered in this way, the benefits and the love from which they proceeded will awaken in our soul great gratitude and great love for Him who has loved us ever with a perpetual love.

The saints add that God's asking us to return thanks for His benefits is not because He has any need of our gratitude, but it is all for our greater good and advantage, for in this way we make ourselves worthy of new benefits. St. Bernard says that ingratitude and forgetfulness of benefits received gives God cause to strip man of them. "Ingratitude is a burning wind that dries up and consumes everything, and blocks and closes the fountain of God's mercy"—*Ingratitudo est ventus urens, fontem pietatis exsiccans, rorem misericordiae et gratiae fluentia non recipiens*. So gratitude and giving thanks to God for His benefits move God to preserve and increase them. As the rivers run into the sea, which is, as it were, their fountain, to rise and return from it once more, so, when we return to God with thanksgiving the benefits received from Him, new gifts and benefits stream back again upon us.

## CHAPTER VII

*Of the Sentiments of Admiration and Hope*

THE fifth sentiment that we can exercise in prayer and meditation on the Passion is admiration, dwelling with admiration on the fact that God, Who is impassible and immortal, should have suffered and died—wondering that He should have suffered and died for those very persons who were putting Him to death and were so unworthy of any good—wondering how He suffered grief and torments so many and so great as no mortal man ever suffered—wondering at the immense charity and tender love of God, at His infinite wisdom and most high counsel, shown in His choosing a remedy so appropriate for the salvation of man, fulfilling at once His justice and His mercy. For a man to dwell on these considerations and others like them which are resplendent here, very leisurely, pondering and admiring them, and the infinite goodness of the Lord, Who wrought such works for such vile, unworthy, and ungrateful creatures, is an excellent meditation. And they even take this for a very high contemplation, when a man is wholly taken up and absorbed in considering and reflecting on the wonderful works of God. The greater light and knowledge one has of these mysteries and the more he reflects on them, the more he will wonder at them, and in this admiration there is included a great love of God, great recognition of and gratitude for His benefits, and deep shame of ourselves. So we should frequently endeavor to arouse in ourselves this holy sentiment, for we shall draw great profit from it. In many places in the Psalms Holy Scripture puts at the end of the verse the Hebrew word *Selah*, which means *Stop*, in reflection and admiration on the mystery, to teach us that we should dwell on this sentiment in the mysteries that we meditate.

The sixth sentiment that we may draw from meditation on the Passion is a great hope and confidence in God. The soul, considering how much God has done for her without any desert on her part, or rather, very ill desert, and considering the earnest will that Christ our Redeemer has shown for her salvation, since that is the thirst which He said He felt on the Cross, is thereby raised to hope of such bounty and mercy that He will give all things necessary and proper for her salvation. *He who hath not spared His own Son, but hath given him over to death for us, how can it be that with him he hath not given us all things?* says the Apostle St. Paul (Rom. viii. 32). And if God did this for us when we were enemies, what will He do when we are striving to be His friends? Let this argument be well marked; it is that of St. Paul (Rom. v. 10), and very consoling. If, when we were enemies and went on offending God, He regarded us with eyes of mercy and reconciled us at so much cost to Himself, with what eyes will He regard us now that we are His friends and need not cost Him His lifeblood any more, as we did then, but all the cost has been already paid! How much will He love us now that He has cleansed and washed us in His Precious Blood, seeing that He did us such a good turn when we were defiled with our sins! If, when we fled from Him and resisted His inspirations, He nevertheless sought us out and invited us and would not leave us until He had drawn us into His house, how can He leave us and forget us after He has so drawn us?

It will also help us greatly in eliciting this sentiment of confidence to dig and delve down deep in the greatness of God's mercy; for this the Church sings that it is proper to God always to show mercy and to spare. *Deus, cui proprium est misereri semper et parcere* (Collect for the Dead). It is true that God is a judge likewise, and His justice is as great as His mercy, for they are all one in God; but the work most proper to God, the work that He does of His

own accord and most fully of His own will, is mercy, as the Royal Prophet sings: *The Lord is good and gentle to all, but his mercies are above all his works* (Psalm cxliv. 9). It is that in which He excels and shines most; that is the work that more than any other He calls His own, the work that is called eminently and most excellently the work of God. So the Apostle St. Paul calls God *rich in mercy* (Eph. ii. 4). Though He is rich in all things, He is said particularly to be rich in mercy. Such a phrase brings out excellence on some particular point. As we say here: "Jonathan is rich in flocks and herds," so that in which God is most rich, and His riches rise to an eminent and surpassing height, is in mercy. "O God, Who dost manifest Thine almighty power most of all in sparing and showing mercy"—*Deus qui omnipotentiam tuam parcendo maxime et miserando manifestas*, so sings the Church. In this it is that the omnipotence and greatness of God most manifestly appears, in pardoning and showing mercy, and on this He prides Himself most. As we see on earth a knight who has many good points priding himself more particularly on one, this man on being just, that other on being liberal, so God prides Himself most on being merciful.

To show mercy, says St. Bernard, is the proper work of God, and the work that He does of His own accord. Of His own nature He is running over with mercies and benefits; and He needs no merit of ours, nor does He depend on that, to deal mercifully with us. But to punish is, as it were, foreign to God's nature; for that it is necessary that we should provoke Him and compel Him thereto by our sins. It is the nature and property of the bee to make honey, but to sting is a thing that she does not except when molested and provoked thereto—it is as it were perforce and under wrongful provocation that she comes to do that; so, when God comes to chastise and condemn, it is, as it were, perforce, under what we may call the provocation and compulsion of our sins. And even then, when being greatly pro-



voked and, as we may say, compelled, He comes to punish, He clearly shows His mercy in the grief and regret that He displays, as we see in many passages of Scripture. When the wickedness of men grew, and God was minded to send the deluge, the Sacred Text says: *Touched with grief of heart within, he said, I will destroy man whom I have created, and blot him out from the face of the earth* (Gen. vi. 6-7). It went to His heart to have to lay waste the earth. And the holy Gospel says that Christ our Redeemer wept when He prophesied the ruin of Jerusalem. *Seeing the city, he wept over it* (Luke xix. 41). And by Isaias He says: *Alas, I shall take satisfaction from mine enemies, and wreak my vengeance on my foes* (Isaias i. 24); as the judge who can do no otherwise than pronounce the sentence of death, pronounces it nevertheless with tears.

And not only in this, but in the very chastisement and judgment that God threatens us and seeks to terrify us therewith, His infinite love and mercy is clearly seen, and the great desire that He has of our salvation. St. Chrysostom remarks this well in that saying of the prophet: *If ye are not converted, he will brandish his sword: he hath bent his bow and made it ready; and in it he hath prepared instruments of death, fiery arrows* (Psalm vii. 13-14). Great is the clemency and loving-kindness of the Lord, says the saint, to threaten us with a bow and frighten us, and put forward the punishment in forcible words, that we may not come to fall under it. God deals with us in the way that earthly fathers are wont to deal with their children whom they dearly love. They show their displeasure in severe terms, and say what they will do and what is going to happen, that the boy may be frightened and thereupon mend his ways, so that there may be no need to resort to punishment. Again, a stroke with a sword is given at close quarters, but the bow and catapult strike from afar. To wound with the sword, all that is needed is to draw it and give the stroke; but to wound with the bow it is necessary

to string it first, then to draw the arrows out of the quiver and set them on the string. All this stringing and unstringing makes a noise; and therefore the Lord threatens us with a bow, that we may have time to fly from the punishment and escape it, according to the text of the prophet: *Thou hast given a sign to them that fear thee, that they may fly from before the bow, that thy beloved ones may escape* (Psalm lix. 6). And, being about to destroy the world by the deluge, He gave notice a hundred years before, that men might recollect themselves, as one does who purposes to let out the bull. All this shows love and desire not to punish if it could be avoided. In his seventeenth homily on Genesis, speaking of how God punished the serpent that had deceived Eve, the same saint says: See the great mercy of God, how as an earthly father, who greatly loves his son, is not content with punishing his murderer, but takes the sword or lance with which the murder was committed and breaks it into a thousand pieces; so God our Lord dealt with the serpent, who had acted as the sword and instrument of the devil's malice, and condemned it to perpetual punishment. *For God willeth not the death of the sinner, nor rejoices in the perdition of men.* Had it been otherwise, you have given Him occasion enough; for if you had died at the time you know, you would have been by this time many years in hell; but infinite Goodness and Mercy would not give leave to death and the devil for that. *Do I perchance will the death of the sinner, and not rather that he be converted from his ways and live?* says God by the Prophet Ezechiel (xviii. 23). He would not condemn you, because you have cost Him very dear. You have cost Him His lifeblood; so He would not willingly lose what He has bought at so great a price, but would have all men converted and saved, as the Apostle St. Paul says: *Who wisheth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (I Tim. ii. 4). From these and other considerations, of which Holy Scripture and the writings of the saints are

full, we should be helped to trust greatly in the mercy of God, and especially that of which we now treat, to betake ourselves to the Passion and merits of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Of the Imitation of Christ as the Fruit Which We Should Gather from Meditation on His Mysteries*

THE seventh thing that we should gather and should exercise ourselves upon in meditation and prayer on the Passion is imitation of the virtues that there shine forth in Christ. There are two chief reasons, so the saints tell us, why the Son of God came into the world, made Himself man, and wrought these most holy mysteries. The first and chiefest was to redeem man by His death and Passion. The second was to give man a most perfect example of all virtues, and persuade men at the same time to imitate and follow Him in the practice of them. To that end, having done at the Last Supper that work of most profound humility, going down on His knees before His disciples and washing their feet with His divine hands, He said to them thereupon: *I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so ye do* (John xiii. 15). And the counsel that He then gave them as regards this work, He would have us take as applying to all the rest, as the Apostle St. Peter signifies in his first canonical epistle, where, speaking of the Lord's Passion, he says: *Christ hath suffered for us, leaving us an example that we follow in his footsteps* (I Pet. ii. 21). And so the blessed St. Augustine says: "The Cross is not only the bed on which Christ died, but also the chair from which He taught us by His example what we are to do and imitate"—*Crux Christi non solum est lectulus morientis, sed et cathedra docentis*.

And although the life of Christ was a most perfect example and pattern of virtue, yet He has seemed to wish to sum

up in His Passion all that His whole life long He had taught us by word and example, making all virtues shine forth in it to their highest degree. So we should strive to draw from the consideration of these mysteries desires of imitation of the virtues of Christ, considering and weighing leisurely and attentively each virtue by itself, and drawing thence a strong sentiment and desire of that virtue in our will, and an efficacious determination and resolution to practise it and put the acts and operations thereof into execution, along with great hatred and abhorrence of the contrary vice. Thus in consideration of the humility of Christ, how, God as He was, He abased Himself and willingly gave Himself over to the insults and affronts of men—and such affronts too—a man should thereupon make naught of himself, taking himself for something small and cheap and heartily desiring that they should pay him no honor nor esteem, nor give him precedence over others; and purpose that, if any affronts and signs of contempt on the part of men do befall him, he will suffer them cheerfully and rejoice in their being offered him, the better to imitate and appear in everything like unto Christ our Lord. In the same way, considering the patience of Christ, he should purpose to suffer willingly and accept cheerfully any adversities that may befall him, and desire that they may befall him and that God may send him afflictions and pains in this life in imitation of Christ our Lord. St. Bonaventure used to say: “I do not want, O Lord, to live without wounds and pains, since I see Thee so full of them”—*Nolo, Domine, sine vulnere vivere, quia te video vulneratum*. In this way we should go through all the rest of the virtues—obedience, charity, meekness, chastity, poverty, abstinence—since they all shine forth here, exercising ourselves in desire to imitate Christ in them all.

Here is to be observed a point we have touched on before, that in each virtue we should descend to particular occasions that may occur, accepting them and rejoicing in them



for the love of God, for this is more profitable than generalities and more necessary for us. Thus, if you are on the virtue of humility, you should descend to the imagination of particular occasions that are likely or possible to occur of your being depreciated and held in small esteem; first the easier occasions and then the more difficult ones, that you think you would feel more if they did occur, and you should dwell upon them, eliciting acts and rejoicing in them as if they were present. And in the same manner when you are on indifference, patience, mortification, or conformity with the will of God. In this manner, little by little, the virtue sinks into your soul, and the contrary passion or vice is mitigated and reduced. Thus subsequent action will be rendered easier when occasion offers, you being forewarned and forearmed to meet it; and to this end the desires and resolutions made in meditation are directed.

Here we have given very copious and abundant matter, very rich and profitable, to occupy ourselves therewith in prayer and meditation on the Passion of Christ our Lord, as also on the mysteries of His most holy life. And no one can reasonably say that he does not know what to do or how to occupy himself therein, since we have mentioned so many sentiments on which we may dwell in each point. To this we may add that in every mystery and in every sentiment suggested by those mysteries, to move ourselves the more thereto we may consider and ponder the following things: first, Who it is that suffers; secondly, what it is that He suffers; thirdly, in what disposition He suffers—to wit, the patience, humility, meekness, and love with which He suffers and embraces those afflictions and insults; fourthly, for whom He suffers; fifthly, from whom; sixthly, the end for which He suffers. These are the points generally assigned here by the saints, and we may dwell on them with great profit.

And though there were nothing else, we have in this last sentiment alone of desire of imitation matter for all our

life, as may be seen in two ways. First, because we may run through all the virtues, having need of them all, and shall find them all in Christ. Secondly, because under each virtue we confront particular occasions that are likely or possible to occur. We should have the way smoothed to the practice of them all, and so smoothed as not only to meet the occasions with patience, but with joy and cheerfulness. Here we have occupation for a whole lifetime even on one virtue, much more when there are so many. And so I say that, although the other sentiments mentioned are of leading importance, yet this of imitation is the chiefest and most necessary of all. It contains the sentiment of love of God and the rest that we have enumerated, and embraces all the acts of the virtues. Thus the desire to imitate is not one sentiment only, but is a compendium and sum of all holy sentiments in which Christian life and the perfection thereof consist. This, then, should be our ordinary theme in meditation on the Passion of Christ and His most holy life, and the chief fruit that we should aim at gathering therefrom, each one insisting on the imitation of that virtue of which he stands in greatest need, resting on that, digging and delving down deep and making acts thereof until that virtue comes to saturate him through and through and take root and be deep-seated in his heart, and the contrary passion and vice mitigated and appeased. Then he may pass on to another virtue, and then to another. This is better and more profitable than nibbling in meditation at many things and passing lightly over them.

## CHAPTER IX

*In Which Is Established by Sundry Examples How Profitable and Agreeable to God Is Meditation on the Passion of Christ Our Redeemer*

SILVESTER relates of St. Mary Magdalene that after the Ascension of Christ our Redeemer she retired to a rugged solitude where she persevered thirty-two years. She begged our Savior to teach her in what exercise she should occupy herself in this solitude, to be most pleasing and most acceptable to Him. He therefore sent her at the beginning the Archangel Michael, with a most fair cross in his hands, which he planted at the gate of her cave, that henceforth the saint might have it before her at all hours, without ever losing sight of it, nor ever losing sight either of the holy mysteries which it represented and had been wrought thereon. All the time that she was in this solitude, she meditated continually on those mysteries of the Passion and death of her Redeemer and Master. The saint revealed this to a servant of God of the Order of St. Dominic, as may be read at greater length in the same Silvester.

Ludolph the Carthusian tells of a servant of God who lived a very perfect and holy life; he desired greatly to serve our Lord and to know in particular what works and services were most agreeable to Him, that he might do them for His love. He begged the Lord with much fervor and earnestness to show him this. On one occasion at prayer, making his usual petition, Christ appeared to him, all wounded, naked, and trembling, with a heavy cross on His shoulder, and said to him: "One of the things that please Me most and in which My servants render Me the greatest service is in aiding Me to carry this cross, which they will do by accompanying Me in thought in all My pains and labors, and taking them tenderly to heart." These words said, He vanished.

Vincent, St. Anthony, and Surius, in the Life of St. Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury in England, relate that, when this saint was a boy of tender age, studying the elements of grammar at the University of Oxford, and was one day walking alone in the fields, plunged in holy meditations, there suddenly appeared to him the Child Jesus, white and ruddy as the spouse depicts Him (Cant. v. 10). He made Himself known, and held with Edmund most sweet conversations. Among other things He advised and strongly recommended him henceforth every day to think of some mystery of His life, holy Passion, and death, assuring him that he would find that a great help and succor against the devil and his wiles, and a most efficient means for gaining and keeping himself in all virtue, and in the end for securing a good and happy death. Having given this so wholesome advice, He vanished, leaving the boy Edmund with great comfort at heart. From that time onwards he was very careful to meditate every day at nightfall some mystery of the life or Passion of Christ, and from that meditation he gathered great devotion and no less profit and remedy for all his needs.

In the history of St. Dominic there is written a notice of a religious of that holy order, a German by birth, a man of high virtue and sanctity, how from youth he had a particular devotion to the Passion of Christ and used to think of it very frequently with great emotion and tears, reverencing His most sacred wounds and repeating over each of them the words of the Church: "We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world." With these words, he genuflected seven times, saying each time the Our Father, and begging God to grant him His holy fear and love. And how acceptable and agreeable to God this devotion was, was clearly shown in a singular favor and consolation that was vouchsafed to the reciter of it. For when he was at prayer, Christ our Redeemer appeared to him, looking very bountiful and gracious, and invited him to draw nigh without



fear and taste of His wounds, which he did with profound reverence and humility, applying his mouth to them; and so great was the delight and sweetness that he tasted in his soul thereby that ever afterwards everything that was not God was bitter and an incredible torment to him.

Lipanan and Surius relate of the holy Abbot Palemon, master of St. Pacomius, that one Easter Sunday Pacomius dressed for dinner the ordinary herbs with a little oil and salt, for its being the day it was, whereas on other days his master used to eat herbs only with a little salt. When the holy old man saw them dressed with oil, he began to weep and shed many tears, remembering the Passion of the Lord and saying: "My Master was crucified, and am I to venture to eat oil?" His disciple Pacomius replied that it was Easter Day, and therefore he might allow himself this delicacy; but for all his urgent entreaties to acquiesce in the preparation, he could do nothing with him.

It is told of a Christian captive among the Moors that he was very devout to the Passion of Christ, and for the continual memory that he had of it he went about always sad and weeping. His master, seeing it, asked him sometimes what made him so sad and why he could never make merry with his companions. He always replied that he could not because he had imprinted on his heart the Passion of the Lord. The master, hearing this reply, wanted to know if he spoke the truth; and upon opening his breast and drawing out the heart, they found within it a figure of Christ crucified, most artistically formed, which marvel was a means to the master's conversion to the faith.

A similar thing is related of the holy virgin Clara of Montefalcone. In her life she had been very devout to the Passion of Christ, and after her death there was found in her heart on one side the figure of a crucifix, with three nails, lance, sponge, and reed, while on the other side there were the scourge, with five thongs, the pillar and crown of thorns; which marvel is to this day exhibited at Montefalcone, a place in Italy.



## SIXTEENTH TREATISE

## ON HOLY COMMUNION AND THE MASS





## CHAPTER I

### *Of the Inestimable Benefit and Great Love That the Lord Has Shown Us in the Institution of This Divine Sacrament*

TWO works there are that God has shown us, of all that He has done the most signal, the most apt to astound and cut short the judgments of men. So subtle their contrivance that the Prophet Isaias, speaking of them, calls them *inventions of God*. *Make known among the peoples his inventions* (Isaias xii. 4). They are works in which it looks as though God had set Himself to think in what way He could show Himself eager to communicate and pour Himself out. The first work was the Incarnation, in which the Word of the Father conjoined and united Himself with our nature in a bond so binding and a knot so tight and close that God and man came to be together in one Person. A knot to which all the reason of the world is blind, and to God alone is it clear; darkness and obscurity to all, and to Him alone light and brightness; an indissoluble knot which, once tied, shall never be untied or undone. What He has once assumed, He has never abandoned.

St. Denis says that love is a unitive power, which transforms the lover into the beloved and makes of the two one. Now what no love that ever has been on earth could ever do, that the love of God for man has done. Never had it been seen below the heavens that love had truly made love and beloved into one. Above the heavens that is well seen; the very nature of the Father is that of the Son, and They are one; but below the heavens such a union had never been realized. But the love of God for man has been so great that He has conjoined and united Himself with man in such sort that of God and man there has come to be only one Person; and that so strictly one that man is true God and God is true man; and all that is proper to God can with

truth and propriety be said of man; and, conversely, what is proper to man is said also of God. Thus He Whom men saw, was God; He Whom they beheld speaking by means of bodily lips, was God. He Whom they beheld eating, walking, toiling, was God. He had a real human nature and real human activities; and He Who discharged those activities was God. *Who ever heard or saw the like?* says the Prophet Isaias (lxvi. 8). God is a child, God wrapped in swaddling clothes, God weeping, God in weakness, God weary and suffering pains and torments! There the Royal Prophet says: *Lord, thou hast set thy resting-place on high, evil shall not come near thee, and the scourge shall not approach thy dwelling* (Psalm xc. 9). But now we see, Lord, that the scourges have come near Thee, and the nails, and the thorns, and they have put Thee on a cross; a thing so alien from God, says Isaias, *a strange thing* (Isaias xxviii. 21), a thing that bewilders and arrests the judgments of men and angels.

There has been another work of God, an invention proper to His infinite love, the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament. In the former, He covered His Godhead with a cloak of flesh, that we might be able to see Him; in this, He covers not only His divine but also His human nature with the cloak of accidents that we may have Him for our food. In the former, God gave welcome to man, uniting a human nature with the divine Word, and so made man enter into the innermost depths of the Godhead; in the latter, God wishes you to welcome Him in the innermost depths of your heart. Before, man was united to God; now God and man seeks to be united to you. In the former, the communication and union was with one sole individual nature which is the most holy humanity of Christ our Lord, hypostatically united to the eternal Word. In this latter, He unites Himself to each individual that receives Him, and makes Himself one with him—not now by an hypostatical or personal union, for that were not convenient, but by a union the most

intimate and closest that can be imagined short of that. *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, is in me and I in him*, says the Lord Himself (John vi. 57). Marvelous work! Not only is it the greatest of His miracles, as St. Thomas says, but it is the sum and compendium of them all.

Holy Scripture tells us of King Ashuerus that he made a great and solemn banquet, which lasted one hundred and eighty days, to show his great riches and the glory of his power (Esther i. 3-4). So that great Ashuerus, Christ our Redeemer, has wished to make a royal banquet, to show the greatness of His treasures and riches, and the power and majesty of His glory. The food that is given us in this banquet is God Himself, a work to move the admiration and astonishment of the world, no less than the former. Even over the mere shadow of this admirable mystery, which was the manna, people broke out into the wondering exclamation: *Manhu, what is this?* (Exod. xvi. 15). And afterwards they said: *How can he give us his flesh to eat?* (John vi. 53). And this banquet did not last one hundred and eighty days, as that of King Ashuerus lasted, but has lasted sixteen hundred years, and shall last till the end of the world; it is always being eaten and always endures. With reason did the prophet exclaim: *Come and see the works of the Lord, the wonders that he hath wrought on earth* (Psalm xlv. 9). Amazing the contrivance and wisdom of the counsels of God that He has taken for the salvation of men! It is of this second work that we are to treat now; the Lord give us His grace thereto, whereof we have great need.

The glorious Apostle and Evangelist St. John in his holy Gospel, speaking of the institution of this Most Holy Sacrament, says: *When he had loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end* (John xiii. 1): for it was then that He did them the greater favors and left them the greater pledges of His love, among which one of the chief-

est, or even the chiefest of all, was this Most Holy Sacrament. Therein His Majesty abides truly and really, and in so doing He markedly shows the great love that He bears us. It is the mark of true love to wish to keep its object ever present and ever to enjoy the company of the same, because love cannot bear the absence of the beloved. So when it was time for Christ our Redeemer to leave this world and go to His Father, He wished to depart in such a way as not entirely to depart, and in such a way to go as still to stay. Thus as He came forth from heaven without leaving heaven, so now He goes away from earth without leaving earth; and as He went forth from His Father without leaving Him, so now He goes away from His children without leaving them.

It is further in the nature of love to desire to live in the memory of the beloved, and seek to be ever remembered on his part. For this end, when friends part, they give one another memorials and pledges to awaken this memory. In order, then, that we may never forget Him, He has left us for a memorial this Most Holy Sacrament, in which He Himself dwells in person, wishing that between Him and us there should be no less a pledge to awaken this memory than Himself. So, after instituting this Most Holy Sacrament, He said: Every time you celebrate this mystery, celebrate it in memory of Me, remembering how much I have loved you, how earnestly I have sought after you, and how much I have suffered on your account (Luke xxii. 19; I Cor. xi. 24, 26).

Of the people of Israel, Moses vaunted greatly: *There is no nation so great as to have its gods nigh unto it as our God is nigh unto us, being ever at hand to hear all our supplications* (Deut. iv. 7). Solomon, having built the Temple, stood amazed and said: *Is it possible that God should dwell with men on earth? If heaven and earth, in all their vast amplitude, are not enough to find room for thee, how much less shall this house which I have built!* (III Kings viii. 27).



How much more reason have we to say this, seeing that now it is no longer a figure, but God Himself, that we have for our companion! *Lo, I am with you all days even to the end of the world* (Matt. xxviii. 20). A great comfort and a great favor it is that Christ our Redeemer should wish to remain in our company to console us and lighten the burden of our pilgrimage. If here the company of a friend consoles us in our labors and afflictions, what should it be to have Jesus Christ Himself in our company—to see God enter in at our gates, pass through our wards and streets, be taken up and carried and enthroned in our temples, so that we can visit Him repeatedly and at all hours, day and night, and treat with Him of our affairs face to face, giving Him an account of our labors, recounting to Him our troubles, imparting to Him our temptations, and begging redress and favor for all our needs, in confidence that He Who has loved us so much as to will to be so near us, will not stand aloof when we ask for a remedy for our woes. I will go and *take up My abode in the midst of you*; I will go where you wish to carry Me; *I am ready to pass through your streets*; I am ready to honor you (Levit. xxvi. 11-12).

Not content with our having Him in our temples and houses, the Lord has wished that we should have Him within our heart; He has wished you yourself to be the temple and chalice, the monstrance and reliquary, where this Most Holy Sacrament should be laid and placed. He does not give Himself here to kiss, as He did to the shepherds and the kings, but to receive Him into our breasts. O unspeakable love! O unheard-of bounty! That I should receive into my breast and into my heart God Himself in person! Jesus Christ Himself, true God and true man! The same that the most holy Queen of Angels received and bore nine months in her most pure womb! If St. Elizabeth, mother of the glorious Baptist, on occasion of Thy Virgin Mother, in whose womb Thou wert carried, entering her house, marveled, and full of the Holy Ghost cried aloud,

saying: *Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me!* (Luke i. 43), what shall I say, when Thou comest not by the gates of my material house, but of my body and soul, within me into my innermost self, Thou, O Lord, Son of the living God! With how much more reason may I say, *Whence is this to me!* to me who for so long a time have been the abode of the devil! to me who so often have offended Thee! to me, so thankless and ungrateful! Whence is this to me except from the greatness of Thy mercy, and from Thy being what Thou art, so good, such a lover of men! Whence but from Thine infinite love!

Saints further consider, and with much reason, that, if the Lord had granted this boon only to the innocent and pure, still it would be an inestimable bounty; but what shall we say now that by reason of His wishing to communicate Himself to them He has obliged Himself to pass through the hands of many wicked ministers; and as He allowed Himself to be crucified for our love by the hands of those perverse executioners, so He permits Himself now to be handled by wicked and perverse priests and enter into mouths and bodies, filthy and foul, of many wicked men and sinners, to visit and console His friends! To all this the Lord exposes Himself, and wills to be again and again sold and mocked and crucified and put between thieves, as St. Paul says that they who sin, so far as in them lies, crucify Jesus Christ again (Heb. vi. 6); all this He undergoes to communicate Himself to you. See if we have not good cause to give Him thanks and good cause to serve Him. The Church sings in astonishment that this great Lord had no horror of entering into a maiden's womb; but lay side by side the purity of this maiden and our impurity, and you will see how much greater reason we have to be astonished that He has had no horror of entering into the breast of a sinner.

## CHAPTER II

*Of the Excellent and Wonderful Things That Faith Teaches for Our Belief in This Divine Sacrament*

MANY are the wonderful things that faith teaches us as being wrought by the words of consecration. The first thing that we have to believe is that, as soon as the priest has done pronouncing the words of consecration over the host, there is there the true body of Christ our Redeemer, the same that was born of the virginal womb of the most holy Virgin, the same that was on the Cross and rose again, the same that now is seated on the right hand of the Father. And when the priest has done pronouncing the words of consecration over the chalice, there is there the true and Precious Blood. And supposing there to be said at the same hour all over the Church one hundred thousand Masses, in the instant in which the priest has done pronouncing the words of consecration God works this wonderful change; and in all those Masses there is the real and true body and blood of Christ our Redeemer; here they are consuming it, here they are consecrating it, but everywhere it is one and the same.

The second wonderful thing that we have to believe is that after the words of consecration there remains nor bread nor wine on the altar; although to our eyes, touch, taste, and smell, it appears to us that it does remain, yet faith tells us that it does not. The patriarch Isaac said to his son Jacob, on the occasion when, to gain the blessing and the birthright of the elder brother, Jacob had covered his hands with goatskins to resemble his brother: *The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau* (Gen. xxii. 22). So here, what we feel with our hands and touch with our senses has the appearance of bread and the appearance of wine, but the voice, that is, faith, tells us it is something else. Faith supplies the defect of the

senses—*praestet fides supplementum sensuum defectui*. And there in the desert, the manna, the shadow and figure of this Sacrament, had also this property, that it tasted like all kinds of things—it tasted like partridge, and it was not partridge; it tasted like trout and it was not trout—so this divine manna tastes like bread, and is not bread; tastes like wine, and is not wine. In the other sacraments the matter is not changed into anything else, but the water in baptism remains water, and the oil, oil in the sacraments of confirmation and extreme unction; but in this Sacrament the matter is changed. Thus what appears bread is not bread, and what appears wine is not wine; but the substance of bread is changed and converted into the true body of Christ our Savior, and the substance of wine into His Precious Blood. St. Ambrose says very well: “He who could make something out of nothing in creating the heavens and the earth, much more should be able to make one thing into another thing and change one substance into another.” Besides, we see that the bread we daily eat is in a short time changed into our flesh by virtue of the natural heat of our body; much more should the almighty power of God be able to effect in an instant this marvelous conversion. And that by seeing one wonder we may cease to wonder at another, it is much more wonderful that God should have made Himself man without ceasing to be God, than that what was bread should cease to be bread and be converted into flesh. But by that divine power whereby the Son of God made Himself Man, by that same the bread and wine are converted into the flesh and blood of Christ; for *to God nothing is impossible*, as the Angel said to our Lady (Luke i. 37).

Thirdly, there is another peculiarity of this conversion, not according to the manner of other natural changes. In them, when one thing is changed into another, there remains something of the substance of the thing that is changed, since the matter remains the same and the only



thing changed is the form; as when earth is changed into silver, and water into crystal. It is as when out of a little clay or wax you make once in a way a horse or a lion. But in this admirable conversion, after the consecration, there remains in the host nothing of the substance of bread; and in the chalice there remains nothing of the substance of wine, neither form nor matter, but the whole substance of bread is converted and changed into the whole body of Christ; and the whole substance of wine into His Precious Blood. And so the Church, very appropriately and rightly, as the Council of Trent declares, to signify this total conversion, calls it *transubstantiation*, which means the change of one substance into another. As natural generation may be properly called *transformation*, because in it the form is changed; so in this Sacrament the change is very rightly called *transubstantiation*, because the whole substance of the bread and wine is converted into the whole substance of the body and blood of Christ.

Thus there does not remain in this Sacrament anything of the substance of bread; there remains in it only color, smell, taste, and the other accidents of bread and wine, which are called "the sacramental species." And this is another great wonder that shines forth in this Most Holy Sacrament, that these accidents are there without being in any substance or subject, whereas it is the property of accidents to be united and attached to substance, as all philosophy teaches; since whiteness clearly cannot naturally be by itself, but must be conjoined and united with some substance, and the same of taste and smell. But here, above the whole order of nature, the same accidents of bread and wine remain, being supernaturally supported by themselves, as it were in the air, since the substance of bread and wine, as we have said, is no longer there, and in the body and blood of Christ, which takes its place, those accidents cannot be; and thus God of Himself sustains and supports them by a perpetual miracle.

Further, we have to believe that in this Most Holy Sacrament, under the species and accidents of bread, there is not only the body of Christ, but the whole Christ, true God and true man, as He is in heaven. Thus in the host, along with the body, there is also the blood of Christ our Redeemer, and His most sacred soul, and His most holy divinity. In like manner in the chalice, under the species of wine, there is not only the blood of Christ, but also His body, and His soul and divinity. But theologians observe that all these things are not there for the same reason, or in the same manner; but some are in this Sacrament by virtue and efficacy of the words of consecration, others by way of concomitance or accompaniment. That is said to be in this Sacrament by virtue and efficacy of the words, which is signified and set forth by those very words of the form of consecration. And, taken in this way, there is not in the host anything more than the body of Christ, nor in the chalice anything more than the blood, because the words effect what they signify, and this is all that they signify: *This is My body; This is My blood.* Those things are said to be present by way of concomitance or accompaniment which are united and in company with that which is expressed and declared by the words. And since the body of Christ is not now alone, but is united with the blood and the soul and the divinity, therefore all these things also are there together in the host. And since the blood in like manner is not now by itself alone, but is united with the body and with the soul and divinity, therefore all those things are likewise in the chalice. That may be well understood by the following consideration. Divines say that, if during the three days that Christ was in the tomb St. Peter or any other of the apostles had consecrated, there would not have been in that Holy Sacrament the soul of Christ, because then the soul was not united with the body, but there would have been only the dead body, as it was in the sepulcher, although united with the divinity, because that

never left it. In like manner, when Christ consecrated at the Supper on Holy Thursday, there was in the Sacrament Christ our Redeemer, true God and true man, but passible and mortal, as He then was; but now He is in the Sacrament alive, glorious and risen again, immortal and impassible as He is in heaven.

But though it is true that in the host there is the blood, and in the chalice the body of Christ our Redeemer, it is fitting none the less that the two consecrations be made separately, each by itself, for the more lively representation of the Passion and death of Christ, in which the blood was separated from the body; and thus mention of that fact is made in the words of consecration of the chalice: *qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur*. Also, inasmuch as this sacrament was instituted for the nourishment and sustenance of our souls, it was fitting that it should be instituted not only as meat, but also as drink, since the perfect nourishment of the body consists of those two things. But we may draw one conclusion from this for the comfort of those who are not priests. It is that, though they do not communicate under both kinds, as they do who say Mass, but only under the species of bread—and that for many very grave reasons which the Church has found for the practice—yet in receiving in the host the body of Christ our Redeemer, they receive likewise His blood and His soul and divinity, because He is whole, entire, and perfect under each of the two species. And theologians and saints say that they receive as much grace as priests who communicate under both species, provided they approach with equal dispositions. St. Hilary says that as in the manna, which was the figure of this Most Holy Sacrament, neither he who gathered more found that he had more for that, nor he who gathered less that he had less for that, as Holy Scripture assures us (Exod. xvi. 18); so also in this Divine Sacrament neither he who receives under the species of bread and wine receives more for that, nor he who receives only

under the species of bread receives less for that. All are equal in this particular.

Moreover, there is another great wonder in this Most High Sacrament. It is that not only is Christ whole and entire in the whole host, and whole and entire in the chalice; but in every particle of the host and in every drop of the species of wine, there is also the whole Christ, as entire as He is in the whole host and as entire as He is in heaven, however small the particle be. This is also gathered clearly from the Gospel itself; for Christ our Lord did not consecrate separately and by itself each mouthful of those with which He communicated His apostles, but He consecrated at once a certain quantity of bread, which when divided should be enough to give Communion to them all. And so of the chalice the holy Gospel says expressly that Christ gave it to His apostles, saying: *Take and divide it among you* (Luke xxii. 17). And not only when the host or the blood is divided, but also before the division, there is the body of Christ whole and entire in the whole host, and whole and entire in every part of it, and whole and entire in the whole species of wine, and whole and entire in every drop of the same. There are some examples and comparisons here in Nature that may serve to throw some light on this matter. Our soul, too, is whole in the whole body and whole in every part of it. My speaking voice, which is the example alleged by St. Augustine, is the whole in your ears and whole in those of all who hear me. And if you take a mirror, you will see in it your figure whole and entire, although the mirror be small, and much smaller than you. And if you divide the mirror into many parts, you will also see your figure in each part, neither more nor less than you saw it in the entire mirror. These and the like examples and comparisons are brought up by doctors and saints to illustrate these mysteries for us; and while in none of them is the comparison perfect, yet they all serve to throw light.



There is also here another mystery, that, when the host and the blood are parted and divided, the accidents of bread and wine are what is there parted and divided; but Christ is neither parted nor divided, but remains entire in every particle, however small it be. And in like manner when you divide the host in your mouth, you do not divide or diminish Christ. St. Jerome says: "What a deception and illusion of our senses! It looks as though we divide and break Thee up as we do the material bread that we eat; but the truth is that we do not break or divide Thee in our mouths, but only the accidents which we see; but Thou, O Lord, remainest perfect and entire in every particle, without alteration or division, and we receive Thee entire." So the Church sings in the "Lauda, Sion":

*Not a single doubt retain,  
When they break the Host in twain,  
But that in each part remain  
What was in the whole before;  
Since the simple sign alone  
Suffers change in state or form,  
The Signified remaining one.*

There happens to us in this banquet the opposite of what happens in earthly feasts, in which you cut an article of food, but not the plates or containing vessel; but at this divine table it is not so: the plate and containing vessel, which are the accidents, are divided, and the food and nourishment remain entire. Moreover, at other tables you eat the meat and the food, but you do not eat the containing vessels nor the plates; but at this sovereign table we eat the food, and it is so much to our taste that we eat the plate with it.

All these things that faith teaches us we must be content for the present to believe and venerate without seeking to scrutinize them curiously. We must go ever upon this fundamental principle laid down by St. Augustine: "Let us

allow that God can do something which we must confess that we cannot search into"—*Demus aliquid Deum posse quod nos fateamur illud investigare non posse*. As the saints well say, the things of God would not be great if our understanding and reason were able to comprehend them (À Kempis, iv. 18). Thus it is the merit of faith to believe what we do not see. And there is something even special about the mysteries of this Most Holy Sacrament, which there is not in the other mysteries of faith; that in the others we believe what we do not see—a praiseworthy thing certainly: *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed* (John xx. 29)—but in this we have not only to believe what we do not see, but contrary to what it seems we do see, because to our senses it seems that there is bread and wine here, and we have to believe that there is not.

The faith that we hold about this mystery is like to that which Abraham had, whom St. Paul so much extols, who "hoped against all hope"—*contra spem in spem credidit* (Rom. iv. 18). Supernatural hope overcame the natural distrust which came of what his eyes saw. He believed and hoped that he should have a son, contrary to all that natural hope could promise him, for naturally that could not be, since he and his wife were far advanced in years. And afterwards, when he was ready to sacrifice this son as God had commanded him, he still believed that the Lord must surely fulfil the promise that He had made of multiplying his posterity through that very son. So in this Divine Sacrament we believe the contrary of what all our senses naturally tell us, and thus our belief is highly meritorious. God said to His people: *In the morning ye shall eat bread, and in the evening I will give you flesh* (Exod. xvi. 12). The morning is this present life: God gives Himself to us under the appearance of bread and wine; but at evening-tide, whereby is signified the glory of heaven, you shall see the flesh of Christ and understand clearly how and in what manner it is there; the veil shall drop, the cur-

tains shall rise, and we shall see all these things clearly.

Many and well authenticated are the miracles that we might allege in confirmation of what we have said. Writings of the saints and histories are full of them; but I mean to quote only one, which is related in the chronicle of the Order of St. Jerome. A religious named Friar Peter de Cavañuelas, who was afterwards Prior of Guadalupe, was much assailed by temptations against faith, especially regarding the Holy Sacrament of the altar; his thought kept saying to him, how could it be that there was blood in the host. The Lord vouchsafed to deliver him from this temptation in a wonderful manner, which was that, when he was saying one Saturday the Mass of our Lady, after he had consecrated, and was bowing down to say the prayer which begins *Supplices te rogamus*, he saw a cloud descending from on high and enveloping the whole altar where he was saying Mass, so that he could see neither host nor chalice for the darkness of the cloud. He was much frightened at this occurrence and full of great terror at the sight which met his eyes. So he begged the Lord with many tears to be pleased to deliver him from this danger and show why it had happened. While he was thus in tears and great alarm, little by little the cloud disappeared, and the altar stood out entire. And looking at the altar, he saw that the consecrated host was gone, and the chalice was uncovered and empty, because the blood also had been taken away from it. So great was his astonishment and fear at this sight that he was like a dead man; and, coming to himself, he began with great grief of heart, and shedding many tears from his eyes, to ask once more our Lord, and his most holy Mother whose Mass he was saying, to forgive him if this had happened through any fault of his, and deliver and draw him out of so great a danger. While he was in this perplexity, he saw the host coming in the air, resting on a paten shining with light, and placing itself over the mouth of the chalice; and thereupon there began

to ooze out of it drops of blood, and trickle down within the chalice, and the quantity that came out was the same as that which had been there before. And when the blood had ceased flowing, the pall or fold of the corporal came to put itself once more over the chalice, and the host came to be in its place on the altar as it was before. The priest stood amazed to see such great mysteries; and, not knowing what to do, he heard a voice saying to him: "Finish thy duty, and let all that thou hast seen be kept secret;" and from that time onward he never felt the temptation any more. The acolyte, or server, who served the Mass, saw none of these things, nor heard he the voice, but noticed the priest's tears and how he took much longer over the Mass than usual. All the above narrative was found after his death in a paper written with his own hand, folded in his general confession, which he did as a sign of the secret which he had been bidden to keep.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Here Begins the Discourse on the Preparation Which the Excellence and Dignity of the Divine Sacrament Requires*

THIS Divine Sacrament has this superiority over all the rest, that there is in it really and truly Jesus Christ Himself, true God and true man; and for this reason it is the most excellent of the sacraments and that which works the greatest effects of grace in our souls. In other sacraments we partake of the grace that is communicated to us there, but in this we partake of the very fountain of grace. In other sacraments we drink, as it were, from a stream flowing from the fountain, but in this we drink of the fountain itself, since we receive Christ Himself, true God and true man. And so this Sacrament is called *Eucharistia*, which signifies *Good grace*, because every good gift



of grace, and the source of it all, is there; as also because therein is given to us the Son of God Himself, Who truly is called a *Grace* and a *Gift* given to the human race in the mystery of the Incarnation. It is also called *Communion*, in accordance with what St. Luke says of the faithful, that *they were persevering in the communion of the breaking of bread* (Acts ii. 42); for in receiving this Most Holy Sacrament we partake of the highest and greatest good that there is, which is God, and with Him of all spiritual good gifts and graces. In giving us His flesh and blood He makes us partakers of all those treasures which He has earned for us by that sacred flesh and blood. Another reason why it is called Communion is because it unites the faithful one with another, all sitting at the same table and receiving the same food. Thus we communicate and share together, and are conjoined so as to make one reality, at least in faith and religion, and we are all one body, as St. Paul says: *We are all one bread, one body, we who partake of one and the same bread* (I Cor. x. 17). And so St. Augustine says that Christ instituted this Sacrament under the species of bread and wine to signify that, as bread is made of many grains of wheat, united together, and wine of many grains of grapes, so of many faithful who communicate and partake of this Sacrament there is made one mystical body.

St. John Damascene likens this Most Holy Sacrament to that fiery coal wherewith one of the seraphim purified the lips of the Prophet Isaias and took away all his imperfections. So, he says, this heavenly food, by being united with the divinity, which is *a consuming fire* (Deut. iv. 24), consumes and cleanses away all our imperfections and ailments and fills us with spiritual gifts and good things. Lastly, this is that banquet spoken of in the Gospel, in which God bids the guests to be told: *I have prepared my banquet, my beeves and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready* (Matt. xxii. 4). In saying that all things are

ready and prepared, He gives us to understand that here in this sacred banquet we have all things that could be desired. So the Prophet David said of this food: *Thou hast prepared, O God, in thy sweetness for the poor* (Psalm lxvii. 11). He does not say what it is that He has prepared, because the good that is herein contained is so great that no words can express it.

With good reason, then, does the Church exclaim: "O sacred banquet, in which we receive God"—*O sacrum convivium, in quo Christus sumitur*. That very name of banquet tells of the joy and satisfaction and abundance and plenty that there is in it. "O sacred banquet, in which the memory of the Passion is renewed," the memory of that excess of love wherewith God has loved us, giving Himself up for us unto death, even the death of the Cross! O sacred banquet, wherein our soul is sated and made full of grace! O sacred banquet, wherein there is given us a pledge of glory!—and such a pledge as to be nowise distinct from that which is to be given us hereafter, as is the usual case of pledges given on earth; but one and the same God, Who is to be our recompense and reward, gives Himself for pledge in this sovereign banquet, save only that here they serve Him up to us in a covered dish, whereas in that banquet and supper of heavenly glory they will serve Him to us in a dish uncovered.

But the excellence of so high a Sacrament, and the great majesty of the Lord Whom we are to receive, require that the disposition and preparation for it be very great. The Royal Prophet, speaking of the building of the Temple of Jerusalem, says: *It is a great work, for we are not about building a dwelling place for man, but for God* (I Chron. xxix. 1). And when he had got together a great quantity of gold, silver, vessels, and precious stones, it all seemed to him nothing. What, then, should be the preparation of the temple and dwelling in which we are to receive God Himself in person, Who must be greater by as much as the

typified exceeds the type, and the living the painted figure!

Apart from what is due to the majesty of so great a Lord, it likewise very much concerns ourselves to come well prepared to receive this Most Holy Sacrament; for according to the preparation and disposition that we bring will be the grace that we receive, as he who draws water from a spring draws more the larger the vessel that he brings. And for the better understanding of what we wish to say on this point, theologians here observe that not only will there be greater grace received for the greater merit of acts and good works which one brings to the reception of this Sacrament, which is called in the language of the Council of Trent grace *ex opere operantis*, but also, apart from that, the grace which the Sacrament gives of itself by divine privilege and institution, which they call grace *ex opere operato*, will be greater in proportion to the better disposition wherewith we approach the Sacrament. For God works in the order of grace as He does in the order of nature. In the natural order we see that all things work according to the dispositions they find in the subject matter they work upon. Thus fire is quickly kindled of dry wood; but if the wood is not dry, it will light more slowly, and so according to the degrees of dryness will be the working of the fire. So it is also in this Divine Sacrament, and thus in every way it concerns us much to come to it well prepared.

#### CHAPTER IV

*Of the Cleanness and Purity, Not Only from Mortal Sins,  
but Also from Venial Sins and Imperfections, with  
Which We Should Approach Holy Communion*

WE will speak of three chief things: first, of the disposition and preparation required to approach and receive this Divine Sacrament; secondly, of what we ought

to do after receiving it and of what our thanksgiving should be; thirdly, of the fruit and profit which we should gather from Holy Communion. And to begin with the first, the disposition and preparation required for this are much greater than what is required for the other sacraments; since the greater the excellence of sacraments, the greater the preparation and purity needed to receive them. Thus some sacraments there are for the worthy reception of which it is enough to have sorrow and true repentance for our sins, without its being necessary to go to confession; but this Divine Sacrament is of such dignity and excellence, on account of God Himself being contained in it, that over and above what has been said it requires another sacrament by way of disposition, which is the sacrament of confession, when there has been any mortal sin going before. Thus it is not enough to approach with sorrow and contrition, but confession must precede, as has been ruled by the Council of Trent (Sess. xiii. Cap. 7), according to the saying of the Apostle St. Paul: *Let a man prove himself, and so eat of this bread and drink of this chalice* (I Cor. xi. 28). The Council of Trent thus explains these words, that it is necessary for a man to come proved and examined by the examination and judgment of confession. This disposition and preparation is necessary for all Christians, under pain of mortal sin; and it is disposition enough to receive grace in the Sacrament.

But though it is true that for venial sins and other faults and imperfections not amounting to mortal sin, a man does not entirely lose the fruit of this Most Holy Sacrament, but receives an increase of grace, as theologians say; yet he does lose that copious and abundant fruit of graces and virtues and other admirable effects which the Sacrament is apt to work in purer and more devout souls. For, though venial sins do not extinguish charity, they deaden fervor and diminish that devotion which is the most proper disposition required for this Divine Sacrament. And thus, if we



wish to have a share in that abundant fruit which they are wont to enjoy who come to Communion as they ought, it is necessary to come pure, not only from mortal sins, but also from venial sins. Jesus Christ Himself taught us this disposition by the example He gave of washing the feet of His disciples before giving them Communion, giving us to understand, as St. Bernard says, the cleanness and purity with which we ought to approach this Most Holy Sacrament, cleanness not only from mortal sins, but also from venial sins, which are the dust that is wont to gather on the feet. St. Denis the Areopagite says that by giving us this example of washing their feet our Lord requires extreme cleanness, not only from venial sins, but also from other faults and imperfections. He brings in to this purpose the ceremony that the Church practises in the Mass, of the priest washing his hands before offering the Holy Sacrifice. He well observes that he does not wash his whole hands, but only the tips of his fingers, to signify that we should not only be free from grievous sins, but also from lighter sins and from faults and imperfections. If Nabuchodonosor commanded that they should choose out children *in whom there was no blemish* (Dan. i. 4), pure, clean, and beautiful, to give them of the delicacies of his table and nourish them of the same, how much greater reason must there be that, to approach this divine and royal table, we should come with great cleanness and purity! In short, it is the bread of angels, and we should approach it with the purity of angels.

Peter of Cluny tells of a priest, in that part of Germany which is called Thuringia, that, whereas he had at first been a man of good and holy life, he came afterwards to fall miserably into a certain sin of impurity; and then adding sin to sin he dared to approach the altar and say Mass without amendment or confession—a usual mistake of some who, having led a good life, then when something shameful befalls them dare not confess it, nor yet give over Com-

munion, not to lose the good opinion and credit they had before, pride so blinding them. God was pleased to chastise him affectionately as a father by doing something to open his eyes. It was this. At the time of receiving, holding Christ in his hands, the host disappeared from them, and in like manner the blood disappeared from the chalice, leaving the priest that day without Communion and not a little terrified. The same thing happened to him two other times on which he was minded to come again and say Mass, to see whether the Lord would give him the same token of indignation against him as before. Thereupon he recognized how great were his sins and with what good ground the anger of God was roused against him. His eyes filled with tears, he went to throw himself at the feet of his bishop, and with great sentiments of grief related to him what had happened, confessed and received at his hands the penance that he deserved in the way of fasts, disciplines, and other austerities, wherein he occupied himself a long time without daring to come back to celebrate, until his prelate and pastor came to command or give him leave to do so when it seemed that he had made sufficient satisfaction to God for his sins. Then a marvel came about at the first Mass that he said. After having said the greater part of it with extreme compunction and tears, as he was going to receive, suddenly there appeared to him overhead the three hosts which for his unworthiness had formerly disappeared; and in the chalice he found all that corresponding quantity of blood; by this so evident token the Lord wished to show him that his sins were forgiven. He was full of gratitude for this mercy of the Lord, and with much joy received likewise the three hosts, and from that time forth persevered in a very perfect life. Such is the story, says Peter of Cluny, that the bishop of Clermont related to him in presence of a large company. Caesarius in his Dialogues recounts another instance not unlike it.

## CHAPTER V

*Of a More Particular Disposition and Preparation Where-  
with We Should Approach This Divine Sacrament*

TO enjoy completely the admirable fruits which this Divine Sacrament carries with it, the saints and masters of spiritual life say that we should endeavor to prepare for it by another more particular disposition, which is actual devotion. So we will declare here what this devotion ought to be and how we are to awaken it in ourselves. We must approach Holy Communion, they say, first, with the greatest humility and reverence; secondly, with the greatest love and confidence; thirdly, with great hunger and desire of this heavenly bread. To these three things may be reduced all the varieties of sentiments with which we may awaken actual devotion, as well before receiving this Holy Sacrament, as also at the time of Communion, and likewise after Communion. There are books full of considerations to this purpose, very good and very well drawn out. We will here only touch upon some of the most ordinary, which are often the most profitable, opening the way so that upon this foundation each may enlarge the subject for himself; for that method will be more moving and more profitable, according to the doctrine that we have in the Book of the Spiritual Exercises.

In the first place, we are to approach this Most Holy Sacrament with very great humility and reverence, which will be awakened in our soul by the consideration on the one hand of the sovereign majesty and greatness of God, Who is truly and really in this Most Holy Sacrament—the same Lord Who by His mere will created, conserves, and governs the heavens and the earth, and by that same will could annihilate them all; in Whose presence the angels and the highest seraphim fold their wings, tremble and quake with profoundest reverence; on the other hand, turn-

ing thence our eyes upon ourselves, looking at our lowliness and misery. At other times we may approach with the heart of the publican in the Gospel (Luke xviii. 13), who dared not draw nigh to the altar or raise his eyes to heaven, but standing afar off beat his breast with great humility, saying: *O God, be merciful to me a sinner*. At other times we may come with the words of the prodigal son: *Lord, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son: receive me as one of the hired servants of thy house* (Luke xv. 18-19). At other times, with those words of St. Elizabeth: *Whence is this to me?* (Luke i. 43), as we have said above. It will also be very well to consider attentively those words which the Church has made an institution for the time of Communion: *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but speak only the word, and my soul shall be healed* (Matt. viii. 8). Lord, I am not worthy, but I come to this intent that Thou mayest make me worthy. Lord, I am weak and infirm, but for this I come that Thou mayest heal and strengthen me; for, as Thou hast said: *They who are well have no need of a physician, but they who are sick* (Matt. ix. 12), and it is for them especially that Thou hast come.

Eusebuis, writing of the death of St. Jerome, at which he was present, being his disciple, says that, when he was on the point of receiving this Most Holy Sacrament, he broke out into exclamations of wonder, on the one hand, at the majesty and goodness of the Lord, and on the other hand turning his eyes upon himself, he said: "How dost Thou, O Lord, now humble Thyself so much as to wish to come and descend to a man who is a publican and a sinner, and not only to eat with him, but to bid Thyself be eaten by him!" In the Second Book of Kings Holy Scripture relates that David said to Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan: *Thou shalt eat bread at my table*. He answered: *Who am I that thou shouldst set eyes on me, who am but as a dead dog!* (II Kings iv. 7-8). If Mephibosheth said this on being



invited to the table of a king, what might a man well say on being invited to the table of God! Now since we cannot approach this Divine Sacrament with the disposition it deserves, let us make up for it by humility and reverence, and say with the Royal Prophet and with holy Job: *What is man, O Lord, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou dost visit him* (Psalm viii. 5; Job vii. 17), and magnify and honor him so much! With reason does the Church express her wonder and sing: "O wonderful thing! A poor lowly servant receives in his mouth and in his breast his God and Lord"—*O res mirabilis! Manducat Dominum pauper, servus, et humilis.*

In the second place, we should approach this Most Holy Sacrament with the utmost love and confidence; and to awaken that sentiment in us, we should consider the infinite goodness and mercy and love of the Lord, which shines forth so brilliantly here. Who, then, will not love One Who has done so much for us! What will He not give us, Who gives us Himself! St. Chrysostom says very well: "What shepherd feeds his sheep with his own blood! And why speak of shepherds? Many mothers there are who, after the labors of childbirth, hand over their children to other women to nurse and rear. But His love would not suffer that, but He nourishes us with His own blood, and unites us with Himself, and raises us and ennobles us and in every way makes us grow."

The third thing that this Most Holy Sacrament requires is that we should come to it with great hunger and desire. "This bread," says St. Augustine, "requires hunger of the inner man." As bodily food then seems to be doing us good when it is eaten with hunger, so also this divine food will do us great good if the soul goes to it with great hunger, desiring to unite herself with God and to obtain some particular gift and favor. *He hath filled the hungry soul with good things* (Psalm cvi. 9). And the same said the most holy Queen of Angels in her Canticle. To excite this

hunger and desire in our souls, it will help us much to consider on the one hand our great need, and on the other the wonderful effects that this Most Holy Sacrament works. When Christ our Redeemer walked this earth, He healed the infirmities of all who approached Him, and we do not read of anyone's ever asking for a cure and meeting a refusal. The woman suffering from a flux of blood approached Him, touched the hem of His garment, and was cured at once. The sinful woman in the Gospel threw herself at His feet and was pardoned (Luke vii. 37-48). There came to Him lepers, and they were cleansed; there came to Him possessed persons, the blind, the palsied, and all were made whole and sound, *because virtue went out of him and healed all* (Luke vi. 19). So also will He work in this Most Holy Sacrament if we approach with this hunger and desire, for He is the same now as then, and has not changed His nature.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Other Considerations and Modes of Preparation, Very Useful for Holy Communion*

**A**MONG other considerations wherewith we may prepare ourselves for Holy Communion, a very proper one is the memory of the Passion, considering the immense love wherewith the Son of God offered Himself for us on the Cross. For one of the chief reasons why Christ our Redeemer instituted this Divine Sacrament was that we might have an ever-living memorial of His Passion; and so He bade us remember it every time we celebrated. *Do this in memory of me* (Luke xxii. 19). And the glorious Apostle St. Paul repeats the same to us: *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye shall show forth the death of the Lord* (I Cor. xi. 26). And so St. Bonaventure strongly advised this devotion, that every time we go to

Communion we should reflect upon some stage of the Passion; and he says that he made use of this practice himself and that thereby his soul melted away in love of God.

The blessed St. Chrysostom says that he who goes to Communion should make account that every time he communicates he puts his mouth to that precious wound in the side of Christ and sucks His blood, partaking of all that by that blood He has won for us. St. Catherine of Siena, every time that she communicated, made account that she went as she did when she was an infant to the breast of her mother. Others, considering how this Sovereign Sacrament is a memorial of the Passion of Christ, imagine Christ crucified and make a Calvary of their heart, and plant there the Lord's Cross, and embracing it gather in their mouths the drops of blood that fall from thence. Others make account that they find themselves at the supper at which Christ our Redeemer supped with His disciples on the night of His Passion, as though they were seated there with the apostles, and received at His hand His holy body and blood. And this is no mere study and representation of that supper, but in sober truth it is the selfsame supper and the selfsame banquet; and the selfsame Lord, Who then gave His body to His apostles, the same now gives it to us, by the ministry of His priests, with the same love wherewith He then gave it.

It is also a very good preparation to exercise ourselves in the consideration of the following points. First, who is the Lord that is coming? He is the Creator of all things, King and Lord of heaven and earth, God of infinite majesty and perfection. Secondly, to whom is He coming; that is, to me, who am dust and ashes and have many times offended Him. Thirdly, for what end is He coming; that is, to communicate to me the fruit of His Passion and the most precious gifts of His grace. Fourthly, what moves Him to come; that is, not for any interest of His own, since He is Lord of all things and has need of nothing, but

out of pure love and desire of the salvation of my soul, that it may be ever accompanied by His grace. Fifthly, to exercise oneself in acts of the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity.

And since we cannot worthily prepare ourselves to receive the Lord unless He gives it to us so to do, we must beg Him to prepare and trim our soul with humility, purity, love, and reverence as befitting, alleging to that end that common plea: Lord, if a rich and powerful king were to seek lodging in the house of a poor widow, he could not expect her to furnish the place for him to repose in, but would send beforehand his furniture and servants to put it in order. Do so, then, Thou, O Lord, with my soul, since Thou art coming to lodge therein; send Thy furniture before Thee, and Thy angels to adorn and put it in fitting order to receive such a Lord and such a Spouse, according to that saying of the Apocalypse: *I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, adorned for God [ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ] as a spouse dressed for her bridegroom* (Apoc. xxi. 2). Then turning to the sovereign Virgin and to the saints for whom we have special devotion, let us humbly beg of them to secure the fulfilment of this petition.

Besides these preparations, we will add here another very easy one, very useful, and very consoling. When you fail to attain that fervor and those inflamed desires which you wish, and which it were reasonable you should have to receive so great a Lord, practise yourself in conceiving a great will and desire of conceiving such desires, and thereby you shall supply what is wanting to you; for God beholds the heart, and will receive and accept what you desire to feel as though you actually felt it, according to the saying of the prophet: *God hath heard the desire of the poor: his ear hath heard the preparedness of their heart* (Psalm ix. 14). Blossius says that God taught this devotion and mode of preparation to St. Mechtildis. The Lord said to her one time: When thou art to receive Holy Communion, desire to



the glory of My name to feel all the desire and love wherewith the most inflamed heart ever burned to unite itself with Me, and in that way thou mayest approach Me, since I will set My eyes on that love and take it as thou desirest to feel it. The same is read of St. Gertrude. One day that this saint was preparing to receive the Most Holy Sacrament, she was much pained at not being so well prepared as she could wish, and begged the glorious Virgin Mary and all the saints to offer to God for her all the preparation and merits with which any one of them any day had been prepared to receive Him; whereupon the Lord said to her: "Actually before the courtiers of heaven thou appearest with that preparation thou hast asked for." Thus it will be a very good disposition and preparation to desire to receive this Most Holy Sacrament with that fervor and love wherewith the greatest saints approached it, and to desire and beg the Lord that whatever is wanting to us, He may supply by the merits and virtues of Jesus Christ and His saints. We may make use of the same method for our thanksgiving, as we shall presently say; and in the treatise On Prayer we mentioned this method of supplying for our defects.

With these and the like considerations we should awaken in ourselves that actual devotion wherewith the saints say we should approach Holy Communion, sometimes using one, sometimes another, as each shall find it best. But it is to be observed that to prepare ourselves in this manner, and do the part that we ought, it is necessary to take some time to spend thereon. Our Father Francis Borgia, in the treatise he composed on Preparation for Holy Communion, assigns three days for preparation and three days afterwards for thanksgiving, and gives many considerations and exercises to occupy one for those three days. And it would be a very good means to live all the week, and all one's life, in devout recollection; partly in expectation of receiving so great a Lord, partly in memory of the benefit

received. For the mere thought, "Tomorrow I am to go to Communion," or the remembrance, "Today or yesterday I went to Communion," is enough to move the mind to recollection. But if the time that we take for this preparation be not so much as that, at least it may be expected that on a Communion morning we should spend our meditation, or part of it, in one or other of the aforesaid considerations. And it will be a great help the night before Communion, when we are going to bed, to have some care or thought to the effect that "tomorrow I am going to Communion," and as often as we awake in the night, to let it be with the same thought. For if for our daily meditation our holy Father requires this in the Additions which he gives to help the same, with how much more reason may we do it for the day on which we are to receive so august a Sacrament?

## CHAPTER VII

### *What We Are to Do After Having Received the Divine Sacrament, and What Should Be Our Thanksgiving*

**A**S some bodily exercise is generally useful before dinner to revive the bodily heat, so it is useful before Communion to take some exercise in the way of meditation or consideration to revive the heat of the soul, which consists of devotion and love, whereof we have already spoken. In like manner after dinner it is a wholesome practice to spend a little time in good conversation, and the same will hold good after this divine refection, and of that we will treat now. That is the best time to do our business with God and embrace Him within our heart. It is reasonable that we should know how to make the most of it, and not let one particle of so good a time slip by in vain, according to the advice of the Wise Man: *Be not cheated out of a good time, and let not a particle of a good gift escape thee* (Ecclus.

xiv. 14). As for how to spend this time, it should be in the like considerations and sentiments as those which we have mentioned as proper to go before Holy Communion.

Particularly we ought to occupy ourselves, first, in acts of praise and thanksgiving for benefits received, especially for the inestimable benefit of our redemption, and for the favor that the Lord does us here in giving Himself to us and entering into our breasts. And since we have neither the knowledge nor the power to render due thanks for such a high favor, to make up our insufficiency we should offer to the Lord all the thanks and praises that have been given and are being given Him by all the seraphim and choirs of angels from the beginning of the world, and by all the blessed saints while they lived in the world, and chiefly now what they offer in the glory of heaven, and what they are to give Him for all eternity, and join our voices with theirs, desiring to praise Him with the hearts and tongues of all, and inviting all creatures to help us thereto. *Magnify the Lord with me, and let us all exalt His name together* (Psalm xxxiii. 4). And because all this does not come up to what is due God, "since He is above all praise"—*quia maior omni laude*, we should seek to be glad and rejoice at His loving and praising of Himself, since He alone can love and praise Himself sufficiently.

Secondly, we should occupy the time in acts of love of God, since those holy aspirations are nothing else than so many loving acts and heartfelt desires of that sovereign good, such as those of the prophet when he said: *I will love thee, Lord, my strength* (Psalm xvii. 1); *As the hart, wounded by the hunters, seeks after the fountains of water, so my soul, wounded by love, seeks after Thee, O Lord* (Psalm xli. 2).

Thirdly, we should occupy this time in petitions, for it is a very proper time for dispatching our affairs and obtaining favors from God. Holy Scripture relates of Queen Esther that she would not disclose her petition to King

Ashuerus, but simply asked him to be her guest, and said that she would disclose it then. It was done accordingly, and she there obtained all her request. So here in this banquet, where the King of Kings is our guest or, rather, we are His, we shall gain all our requests, since *we come on a good day* (I Kings xxv. 8), and at a happy conjuncture. We may say what Jacob, wrestling with God, said: *I will not let Thee go till Thou hast blessed me* (Gen. xxxii. 26). When Thou didst enter into the house of Zachary, Thou didst say: Today salvation hath come to this house (Luke xix. 9); say as much again, Lord, of this house which Thou hast entered; *say to my soul, I am thy salvation* (Psalm xxxiv. 3). Here we should beg of God pardon of our sins, strength to overcome our passions and resist temptations, grace to acquire virtues, humility, obedience, patience, perseverance. And one should not only ask for oneself but pray to God for the needs of the Church, general and particular, for the pope, for the king, and for all rulers of the Christian commonwealth, spiritual and temporal, and for such other persons in particular as one has any special tie to, whether of duty or of devotion, as we do in the Memento of the Mass.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Of Other Methods of Thanksgiving*

OTHERS make their thanksgiving after Holy Communion in the following manner. They imagine and consider Christ our Lord within their breast as on a cushioned seat or faldstool, and call upon all their powers and senses to recognize and reverence Him for their King and Lord, in the way that in the world, when a man entertains in his house a person of high degree, he is wont to call all his sons and relations to reverence and recognize him. And with each of their senses and powers they do three things: first,



to give Him thanks for His having given this power or sense; secondly, they accuse themselves and are sorry for not having employed it to the end for which the Lord gave it; thirdly, they ask favor and grace to amend their ways from henceforth. This is a very good and useful method of thanksgiving; in fact it is the first method of prayer of the three which our Father sets down in his Book of Spiritual Exercises.

Others imagine themselves afflicted with disease in all their senses and powers, and Christ as a physician who "cures all infirmities"—*qui sanat omnes infirmitates tuas* (Psalm cii. 3). They bring Him round to them, as a physician is brought round to cases of illness; and beg Him, *Come and see, O Lord* (John xi. 34); come and see my sick eyes, this tongue, and so forth, and have compassion on me and heal me. *Have pity on me, O Lord, because I am ailing: heal my soul, because I have sinned against Thee* (Psalm vi. 3; xl. 5).

Let it be here observed that, to go through these exercises and others like them at this time, it is not necessary to make a fictitious composition of place, or seek anything outside of ourselves, since we have present within our breast Jesus Christ Himself, true God and true man, Who is really within us all the time that the sacramental species last; that is, all the time that the substance of bread would last, if it were there. Now, if looking at a figure of Christ serves to make us recollect ourselves for prayer, what must it be to look upon Christ Himself, Who is there present, not in figure, as in the crucifix, but in His own person? Thus everyone should turn to look within himself, considering Christ within him, as the most holy Queen of Angels did when she carried Him within her womb, and hold sweet converse there with his Beloved, saying with the spouse: *I have found him whom my soul loveth, I have held him, and will not let him go* (Cant. iii. 4).

To encourage us to stay and spend more time over our

thanksgiving, we shall be helped by a thing that some theologians say; it is that all the time that the sacramental species last and the real presence of Christ in our breast continues, the more we exercise ourselves in these acts, the greater graces we shall receive, not only for the greater merit of the acts, which they call grace *ex opere operantis*, but *ex opere operato*, by the virtue of the Sacrament (Chapter 3).

Hence will be seen how ill they do who let slip this time in which they might gain so much, and after receiving such a guest in their house, turn their backs immediately so that scarcely has He entered in by one door but they go out by the other, breaking off the conversation. If in the society of this world it would be taken for a piece of discourtesy to receive a guest, a person of credit, in one's house, and after receiving him to pay him no attention, what must it be with a guest like this!

Surius relates of the glorious virgin Margaret, daughter of the king of Hungary, that when she was to communicate she lived the day before on bread and water, in reverence for the heavenly food that she was expecting, and spent the whole night in prayer; after Communion she spent all that day in reciting psalms and praying until nightfall, when she took some slight refreshment.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Of the Fruit That We Should Gather from Holy Communion*

THE virtues and admirable effects of this Divine Sacrament, declared by the saints, are not only to show us its excellence and the immense love and charity that the Lord bears us, but also to make us fix our eyes and heart upon them to the end that we may gather fruit from Holy Communion; and so we will proceed to mention some of

those fruits. This Divine Sacrament, like all the rest, has one effect which is common to all sacraments, that is, to give grace to him who receives it worthily. It has another effect all its own, which marks it off from the other sacraments; that effect is what theologians call "spiritual refec-tion," which means that it is the sustenance and nourish-ment of the soul, whereby the soul is remade and restored, and gathers strength to resist her passions and embrace virtue. Thus on those words of Christ our Lord: *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed* (John vi. 56), the saints commonly say—and the Council of Florence says the same—that all the effects which bodily nourishment works in bodies, this divine food works spiritually in souls. And they say that it was to this end that Christ our Lord chose to institute this Most Holy Sacrament under the appearance of food, that the very appearance under which He instituted it might declare to us its effects and the need that our souls had of it. According to this, as bodily nour-ishment sustains the life of the body and renews its strength, and at a certain age makes it grow, so too this Most Holy Sacrament sustains the spiritual life, restores the powers of the soul, repairs the feebleness of virtue, for-tifies the man against the temptations of the enemy, and makes him grow to his due perfection. This is the bread that *strengtheneth the heart of man* (Psalm ciii. 15), and in the strength of which, like Elias, we are to *journey till we arrive at the mountain of God, Horeb* (III Kings xix. 8).

Bodily food has another property, which is to afford a pleasant taste and relish to him who eats it, and that the more, the better and more costly is the food and the better disposed the palate. So also this divine food not only nour-ishes us, preserves and strengthens us, but also imparts a spiritual relish and sweetness. This accords with what the patriarch Jacob said in those prophetic blessings which he gave to his sons at the hour of his death, announcing what was to be under the law of the Gospel. Coming to his

son Aser, he said: *Aser, his bread shall be fat, and shall afford delight to kings* (Gen. xlix. 20). Christ is this bread, most rich, most sweet, most delicious to the taste. St. Thomas says that so sweet is the taste, so great the relish, that this heavenly bread affords to those who keep their soul's palate clean, that no words can express it, for here spiritual sweetness is tasted in its very fountain, which is Christ our Savior, fountain of all sweetness, and life of all things, Who by means of this Sacrament enters into the soul of the communicant. And frequently this sweetness is so great as not only to refresh the spirit, but also to redound on the body, according to that saying of the prophet: *Mine heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God* (Psalm lxxxiii. 3). Hence it comes about, as St. Bonaventure says, that often a person goes to Holy Communion feeling very feeble and weak, and so great is the joy and consolation that he receives by virtue of this food that he gets up from thence as strong as though he had never felt any weakness at all. An ancient author, Bishop Guimond of Adversa, writes of those ancient monks that, thanks to the great consolation and strength that they felt in Holy Communion, some of them went without any other food, and were sustained by that alone, both body and soul; and the day they did not communicate they felt in themselves such weakness and utter prostration that they thought they should faint and could not live. And he says that for some of them an angel brought Communion to their cell. In the chronicles of the Cistercian Order there is a story of a monk who, every time that he went to Communion, seemed to receive a honeycomb, the sweetness of which lasted for three days.

In accordance with this, the fruit that we should gather from Holy Communion should be a manly courage to journey and go on further in the way of God, with great fortitude to mortify our passions and resist and vanquish temptations, for to that end the Lord has prepared for us



this table. *Thou hast prepared a table in my sight against them that persecute me* (Psalm xxii. 5). At other tables, he who has enemies, fears and dares not be there; but at this, man receives strength and fortitude to overcome all his enemies. And so St. Chrysostom says that we should rise from this holy table like lions, breathing fire, striking terror into the devils. And this effect was signified to us by Christ our Redeemer, when after communicating His disciples He said to them: *Arise, let us go hence* (John xiv. 31), as much as to say: "Now you have communicated, arise, let us go to suffer." And so we see that in the primitive Church, when this Divine Sacrament was so much frequented, not only had Christians strength to keep the law of God, but also to resist the force and fury of their persecutors and give their blood and life for Christ.

## CHAPTER X

### *That the Frequentation of Holy Communion Is a Great Remedy against All Temptations, and Particularly for the Preservation of Chastity*

THE saints say that the frequentation of this Divine Sacrament is a great remedy against all temptations because, besides giving great strength, it weakens the passions and evil habits and inclinations, and allays the fire of concupiscence, the origin of all evils, and makes us prompt and ready to fulfil the will of God. St. Thomas says that one of the reasons why this Most Holy Sacrament defends and delivers us from temptations and falls is because it is a memorial of the Passion of Christ. Now it was by the Passion of Christ that the devils were overcome; so when they see in us the body and blood of Christ, they take to flight, while the holy angels accompany and aid us. St. Ignatius of Antioch and St. Cyril advise for this reason the frequentation of this Most Holy Sacrament, that the devils

may fly from us. And St. Chrysostom says: If the blood of the lamb, the figure of this Sacrament, put on the doorposts of houses, delivered the inmates from the chastisement and slaughter which the destroying angel was working (Exod. xii. 22-23), how much more will this Divine Sacrament do!

Going into details, the saints say that this is a most efficacious means of overcoming impure temptations and preserving chastity, since it quiets the movements of the flesh, mitigates concupiscence, that fuel of sin, and appeases the ardor and appetite of sensuality as water extinguishes fire. In this way St. Jerome and St. Thomas and other saints explain that text of the Prophet Zachary: *What is the good gift of God, and what the beauty of the Lord, but the wheat of the elect and the wine that beareth virgins?* (Zach. ix. 17). They say that the special virtue and effect of this food is to engender virgins. Bodily nourishment, when it is good, engenders good blood and good humors; so this divine food engenders in us chastity and purity of affections. Hence St. Cyril came to say that this Divine Sacrament not only sanctifies the soul, but the body also, fulfilling what the Church asks for in the Sacrifice of the Mass, *salutem mentis et corporis*. This is the handful of meal, thrown in by Eliseus, that removed the poison that was in the pot, and seasoned the contents for food (IV Kings iv. 41). And as by that woman in the Gospel touching the hem of the Savior's robe, there ceased in her the issue of blood (Luke viii. 44); and by the entry of the Ark into the Jordan the waters were arrested and thrown back and ceased their onward flow (Jos. iii. 16); so, when Christ enters into this body of ours, temptations are arrested and the fiery ardor of concupiscence cools down. With reason do the saints exclaim: "O blessed fruit, engendering chastity and making virgins!" A grave doctor says that there is no means so effectual for being chaste as the devout frequentation of Holy Communion.

Nicephorus Callistus, Gregory of Tours, Nauclerus, and other grave authors relate a wonderful incident that happened in the City of Constantinople. It was this. There was a very ancient custom in the Greek Church of consecrating the most holy body of our Lord in loaves such as are used at table. From these consecrated loaves the people communicated; and if there was any left over in the sacristy, the priests called in some children of the most virtuous of those who attended the school, of whose innocence they could be better assured, and gave them these most holy remnants to receive, fasting. Nicephorus says that this often happened to himself, he being a child under age, getting his education at the church school. Now it happened one day, when the children came who were called in for this purpose, there was among them the son of a Jew, a worker in the glassworks, and he communicated along with the rest. The child in consequence being late and not coming home at the accustomed hour, his father asked him where he had been; he said, at the church of the Christians, and that he had eaten of that strange bread which they gave to their boys. The father flew into a great passion with his son, and without waiting for further explanations took him and threw him into the glass furnace, which was alight, and shut the door of the furnace upon him. The mother, missing her child, seeing that much time had gone by and there was no sign of him, went out to seek him all over the city with great anxieties and solitudes and, not being able to find him or any trace of him, she returned home in deep sorrow, till at the end of three days, being near the furnace, renewing her tears and sighs and tearing her hair, she began to call her boy by his name. He hearing and recognizing his mother's voice, answered from within the furnace where he was, whereupon she broke open the door of the furnace, and saw her son standing in the middle of the fire, so whole and unhurt that the fire had not touched a hair of his head. The child came out,

and when they asked him who had preserved him, he said that a lady clad in purple had come there many times, and with water that she threw kept down the fire, and besides that had brought him food as often as he needed it. When this marvel came to the ears of the Emperor Justinian, he ordered them to baptize the child at once, and the mother, both of whom wished to become Christians. As for the unhappy father, who would not be converted, the emperor ordered him to be fastened on a tree as a parricide, and so he died of hanging. Now what this Most Holy Sacrament wrought in the body of that child who had received it, preserving him unhurt in the midst of the fire, it works spiritually in the souls of those who worthily receive it, defending and preserving them unharmed in the midst of the fire of temptations.

## CHAPTER XI

### *Of the Chief Fruit to Be Gathered from Holy Communion, Which Is Our Union with and Transformation into Christ*

ONE of the principal effects and ends for which Christ our Redeemer instituted this Divine Sacrament, or indeed the main end of all, the saints tell us, was to unite us and incorporate us and make us one thing with Himself. As when this Divine Sacrament is consecrated, by virtue of the words of consecration, that which was bread is converted into the substance of Christ, so by virtue of this Holy Communion, he who was man comes to be in a marvelous way spiritually transformed into God. This is what Christ Himself teaches in the holy Gospel: *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed: he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him* (John vi. 56-57). Thus, as food by virtue of the natural heat is converted into the substance of the eater and



becomes one thing with him, so he who eats this bread of angels is united and conjoined and made one thing with Christ, not by Christ converting Himself into the person to whom He gives Himself as sustenance, but by His converting and transforming into Himself him who receives Him, as the Lord Himself said to St. Augustine: "I am the food of the full-grown. Grow and thou shalt eat Me; but I would have thee know that in thy dealing with Me thou shalt not change Me into thyself, as thou dost with thy other food, but thou shalt be changed and transformed into Me"—*Cibus sum grandium. Cresce et manducabis me: nec tu me mutabis in te sicut cibum carnis tuæ, sed tu mutaberis in me* ("Confessions," x. 10). So St. Thomas says that the effect of this Sacrament is to transform man into God, making him like Him. For if fire, as being such a noble element, converts into itself all that it comes in contact with, first destroying all that is in them contrary to itself, and then communicating to them its own form and perfection, how much more will this abyss of infinite goodness and nobility destroy all the evil that it finds in our souls and make them like to itself!

This is that real and true union of Christ with the communicant, which He wished to signify by those words: *He is in me and I in him* (John vi. 57)—the union which the saints explain by many striking comparisons. But leaving aside this union, and coming rather to practical applications, the fruit that we should endeavor to draw from Holy Communion is spiritually to unite ourselves to Christ and change and transform ourselves into Him. That means making ourselves like Him in life and manners, humble as Christ, patient as Christ, obedient as Christ, chaste and poor as Christ. That is what the Apostle means by these words: *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ* (Rom. xiii. 14). In the consecration the substance of bread is changed into the substance of the body of Christ while the accidents remain entire. In Communion it is the other way about;

the substance of man remains, and the accidents are changed, inasmuch as the man from being proud becomes humble, from incontinent chaste, from passionate patient, and in this manner is transformed into Christ.

St. Cyprian on those words of the prophet: *My cup that inebriateth how goodly it is!* (Psalm xxii. 5), which he understands of this Most Holy Sacrament, says that, as inebriation estranges a man from himself and turns him into another man, so does this Divine Sacrament estrange a man from himself and makes him another, causing him to forget the things of this world and henceforth wholly occupy himself with the things of heaven. How did the disciples at Emmaus become other men after having received this Divine Sacrament! (Luke xxiv. 35). Of doubters they became believers; of timid, strong. So we should come from Holy Communion altered and changed into other men. St. Basil says the same, quoting the words of St. Paul: *That he who liveth should no longer live for himself, but wholly for God* (II Cor. v. 15).

A holy woman, St. Angela of Foligno, says a thing very solid and spiritual to this effect. Treating of the conditions and signs by which we may know a soul transformed into God, one of them, she says, is when a man desires to be underrated, put down, and flouted by every creature, and that all should believe him worthy of flouts, and none should have compassion on him; and he desires not to live in the heart of any creature, but only with God. And not only does he desire to be accounted a negligible quantity, a nobody, but he takes it for a great honor to be positively run down, so as to be made conformable to Christ our Lord, to follow Whom is a great honor; and says with St. Paul: *Far be it from me to glory save only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Gal. vi. 14). In this way we should be transformed into Christ, and this is the fruit we ought to gather from Holy Communion.

St. Chrysostom, setting forth the obligation contracted by the reception of so high a Sacrament, says: "When we see ourselves assailed by anger or by any other vice or temptation, let us consider what a great boon has been vouchsafed to us, and let this consideration serve us for a bridle to keep us out of all sin and all imperfection." The tongue that has touched Christ should in all conscience be sanctified, and not talk frivolities or profanities any more. The breast and heart that has received God Himself, and been a sort of pyx to hold the Most Holy Sacrament, should in all conscience not be used for a receptacle of the dung of vain desires, or converse or think now of anything else but God. Here amongst us, when a man eats a lozenge, he breathes all day long the odor of it. You have eaten this divine lozenge which contains heavenly ambergris, the odor of all virtue and Godhead; what in all conscience should be the odor you exhale! We read of a holy virgin that she said: When I go to Communion, all that day I keep my thoughts with extra diligence, imagining the Lord in my heart, as reposing there in His house. Therefore I endeavor to observe all possible modesty, in speech, look, and gait, and in all intercourse with others, like one who puts his finger to his lips, asking them to keep silence and not make a noise, for fear of awakening the sleeper.

## CHAPTER XII

*Of Another Main Fruit Which We Should Gather from  
Holy Communion, Which Is to Offer and Resign  
Ourselves Entirely into the Hands of God;  
and of the Preparation and Thanksgiving  
to Be Made Conformably Thereto*

ONE of the principal results that we ought to secure from Holy Communion is to resign ourselves and place ourselves entirely in the hands of God, like a little clay in the

hands of the potter, that He may do with us what He wishes, as He wishes and when He wishes, and in what manner He wishes, without excepting or reserving anything. The Son of God offered Himself in sacrifice entirely to His Father, giving for us all His blood and His life; and every day He gives Himself to us as food in this Most Holy Sacrament, His whole self, His body, blood, soul, and divinity; it will only be reasonable that we should offer and deliver ourselves over wholly and entirely to Him. This some say is the proper meaning of *communicating*—to share and share alike, to do with God as He does with you. He gives to you and shares with you all He has; do you give Him all you have.

The same should also be our thanks after Holy Communion. *What shall I render to the Lord for all he hath rendered to me?* (Psalm cxv. 12). What for so many favors and benefits, especially for that which I have just now received? Do you know what He wishes you to offer Him? What we have just been saying all along: *Son, give me thy heart* (Prov. xxiii. 26). That holy man [Thomas À Kempis] puts this very well: "What more do I ask of thee than that thou wouldst make it thy endeavor to resign thyself to Me entirely? Whatever else thou givest Me besides thyself, I care nothing for it, for I seek not thy gift, but thee. As it would not be enough for thee to have all other good things besides Me, so nothing can please Me, whatever thou givest, if thou offer not thyself. Offer thyself to Me, and give thyself wholly for God, and thy offering shall be acceptable" ("Imitation of Christ," iv. 8). St. Augustine says that what displeased God in the sacrifice which Cain offered Him, and the reason why He did not accept the sacrifice at his hands as He did at those of his brother Abel, was because he did not make a fair division with God, since he gave God something of what was his without giving and making over himself—*dans Deo aliquid suum, sibi autem se ipsum*. He says that they do the same



who offer God something else, but offer not their own will. "The kingdom of heaven asks no other price but yourself. It is worth exactly what you are. Give yourself, and you shall have it."

This, then, is the offering and entire resignation of ourselves into the hands of God that should occupy and hold our attention after Holy Communion. And the resignation should not be only in general, but we should break the matter up and descend to particular cases, resigning and conforming ourselves to the will of God as well for sickness as for health, for death as for life, for temptation as for consolation, specifying that for which each one thinks he would feel greater repugnance and difficulty, offering himself for it to the Lord in thanksgiving, leaving out no place, nor office, nor grade, however lowly and abject it be; this should be done until nothing occurs to us for which we do not feel our will quite in conformity and union with that of God. To this end there is a very good and devout prayer put by our Father in the Book of Spiritual Exercises. "Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my whole will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given it to me; to Thee, O Lord, I return it; all is Thine, dispose of it according to Thy entire will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for that is enough for me."

Here we should also exercise and put ourselves in action, making acts of various virtues, particularly those we stand most in need of, because all the flavor of anything that anyone needs or requires may be found in this divine manna, *having the flavor of everything delicious to the taste* (Wisdom xvi. 20). It has the flavors of all virtues. Thus one time you can put yourself in action and exercise yourself in one virtue, and another time in another, always keeping an eye on what you most need. If you feel the need of humility, contrive to make it give you the taste of humility, since you will find a good pattern and taste there of

that, seeing the Son of God clad in the accidents of bread, which as being but accidents are more poor and lowly than the swaddling clothes and clouts in which His Mother wrapped Him at Bethlehem. And what greater humility, what deeper abasement, can be imagined than that God should make Himself as food for us to eat Him—that we should spread on that table of the altar there the altar cloths, the corporals as table linen, the paten for a plate, the chalice for a drinking-cup, that we should handle Him with our hands, and receive Him into our mouth and stomach! What greater abasement could there be of God, what greater exaltation of man? In some sort humility shines forth here more than in the work of the Incarnation. Exercise yourself, then, and make acts hereupon until you feel your soul being saturated and soaked through and through. Offer to the Lord in thanksgiving your contempt of all the honor and esteem of the world, and embrace the prospect of being disparaged and held of small account for His love.

It is likewise very good to come down to certain particular and trifling things, and offer them to the Lord in thanksgiving. Everyone knows more or less his own faults, and realizes what is the greatest hindrance to his spiritual advancement and what it is that occasions his most ordinary falls. Let him try at every Communion to sacrifice and offer to God something of that in thanksgiving. You are fond of self-indulgence and your own comforts, and wish nothing to be wanting to you; make an offering to the Lord and mortify yourself in that, today in one thing and another day in another. You are fond of talking and losing time; mortify yourself in that, and offer it to the Lord in another Communion. You are so fond of your own will that, not to encounter a little mortification and trouble, you refuse to give pleasure or do a service to your brothers, and sometimes speak to them in a harsh and disagreeable way; take care to overcome yourself in that, and offer it to the Lord in another Communion. And as we said in treating of

meditation, that it is a good thing to propose in it something to do that very day, so, too, at Communion it will be very good to form a resolution to overcome and mortify yourself in something that very day and offer that mortification to the Lord in thanksgiving. Make account that this is what the Lord asks of you in return for the favors and benefits you have received; that God asks nothing else of us, no other return but that we should amend our lives and correct whatever we know to be displeasing to His Divine Majesty. This is the best thanksgiving that we can make after Communion, and the most agreeable service that we can offer. The three ways of doing things that we have spoken of above may be applied to thanksgiving: the first, by inward acknowledgment of benefits; the second, by extolling and thanking our benefactor in words; the third, by deeds; and this third is the best thanksgiving. This, then, is what we say now. Our whole effort must not go in considerations; good as they may be, deeds are better, and considerations should be made to come to deeds.

I say the same of preparation for Communion. Though this special preparation which we usually make by certain considerations before Communion is very good, and no one ought to omit it, since the reverence of so high a Sacrament requires everyone in this respect also to do his best; yet the best and chiefest preparation must be a good life, and daily improvement in the perfection of our daily actions, so as to approach this Divine Sacrament with greater and more spotless purity, according to that saying of those glorious Fathers and doctors of the Church, Ambrose and Augustine: "Live in such fashion that thou mayest deserve to receive this Most Holy Sacrament daily"—*Sic vive ut quotidie merearis accipere*. So Father Master Avila, in a letter that he wrote on this subject to a person under his direction, says: "The preparation for Holy Communion should be a well-ordered course from week-end to week-end all one's life." He exemplifies this by a saying of a serv-

ant of God who said that he never made any special preparation for Holy Communion, because he did all he could every day. This is a very good preparation, much better than recollecting oneself just for one quarter of an hour after, and remaining as tepid and unmortified and imperfect as before.

This is the principal preparation, and this is the principal thanksgiving, and this must also be the principal fruit that we gather from Holy Communion. As we say of meditation that the principal preparation for it must be the mortification of our passions, recollection of our senses, and custody of our heart, and that this also is the fruit that we should gather from meditation, and the one should aid the other; so also a good and holy life, doing all things to the best of one's power in order to please God, must be the principal preparation for receiving Holy Communion, and also the principal fruit to be gathered from it. One must aid the other, and one Communion must be a preparation for another. And as we say that making a good meditation and drawing profit therefrom does not mean having many consolations and emotions, nor finding many reflections and grand contemplations, but it means a man's coming out from it very humble, patient, detached, and mortified; so also the goodness of a Communion and the fruit of it is not to be measured by the multitude of reflections suggested, however good and holy they may be, nor by sweetnesses and consolations, but by the mortification of the passions and the greater resignation and conformity to the will of God thence ensuing.

Hence follows a most consoling reflection, and it is that it is always in our power to make a good Communion and gather much fruit from it, inasmuch as with the grace of the Lord it is always in our power to offer ourselves and resign ourselves into the hands of God and to mortify and correct ourselves in what we know is displeasing to His Divine Majesty. Do you, then, do that and you will gather



much fruit from Communion; go on every day conquering and mortifying and amending yourself in something. Let the idol of Dagon fall down in presence of the Ark of the Covenant (I Kings v. 3)—that idol of honor, that idol of self-indulgence and seeking after your own comforts, that idol of self-will—let it all fall flat to the ground in reverence to this Lord. Oh, if we made our Communions in this manner, mortifying ourselves and amending ourselves every time in something, no matter how small, how our soul would thrive!

St. Jerome applies to this effect the saying of the Wise Man about the valiant woman: *She hath studied the corners and hidden recesses of her house*—that is the examination and preparation required for approaching this divine table—and *hath not eaten her bread in idleness* (Prov. xxxi. 27), hath not eaten her bread in vain. When one gathers fruit from Holy Communion in the manner that we have said, he does not eat his bread in vain, but what he eats does him good. But woe to him that has eaten this bread in vain for many years, without having overcome himself or mortified one single passion or one evil tendency! He must be very ill, since what he eats does him no good. Let everyone, then, enter into himself and study the corners of his soul, look at the passion or tendency or inclination that does most hurt and creates most disturbance, and go about getting rid of that and mortifying that until he can say with the Apostle: *I live, not I now, but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. ii. 20); words which St. Jerome explains: "I live, not I now; I live no longer, I that formerly lived under the Old Law, I that persecuted the Church; but there lives in me wisdom, fortitude, peace, and all the rest of the virtues; he who has them not, cannot say, *Christ liveth in me.*"

## CHAPTER XIII

*Seeing that This Divine Sacrament Works Such Wonderful Effects, What Is the Reason Why Some Who Frequent It Do Not Experience Them in Themselves*

SOMEONE will ask: Since this Most Holy Sacrament gives so much grace and works so many wonderful effects, what is the reason why many men who frequently say Mass and receive Holy Communion feel in their souls, I do not say merely nothing of that spiritual delight and sweetness of which we were speaking, but, to all appearance, they do not advance in virtue at all, but ever, as the phrase is, "stick in the same rut"? The usual answer with some is to quote the common proverb, that "familiarity breeds contempt." They think that frequentation of Communion is the reason of its not being received with so much preparation and devotion as it might be, and not producing so much fruit. But they are wrong, for that proverb does not hold in spiritual things and dealing with God. Even in dealing with wise and prudent men they say it does not hold; on the contrary, much conversation and familiarity with them is productive of greater esteem and reverence; the more one associates with them, the more he knows their prudence and virtue and so esteems them the more. But granting that the saying holds as regards the wise men of the world—for, after all, in this wretched life none can be so perfect as not to have some faults, and they come out in the course of much dealing and familiarity with them, so that great familiarity there may be a cause of a falling off of good opinion and esteem—yet in familiar dealing with God that cannot have place. He is a Lord of such infinite perfection and wisdom, that the more one deals with Him and knows Him, the more one reverences Him, as we see in the holy angels and blessed spirits, who know God most perfectly in heaven and converse familiarly with

Him; and the same also holds of our experience here on earth, since the more a man converses with God in prayer, the greater his reverence for Him and the idea that he has of Him.

Holy Writ shows us this clearly in the account of the Samaritan woman, who first treated Christ as one of the people: *How canst thou, being a Jew, ask drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?* (John iv. 9). She calls Him by the common name of His nation; but a little further on in the conversation she calls Him "lord": *Lord, give me this water.* And still a little further, she calls Him a prophet: *I see that thou art a prophet.* And still further, she recognizes Him for Christ and Messiah. It is the same way in the frequentation of the sacraments; one Communion disposes us for another. It is a great mistake to suppose that by staying away time after time from the reception of this Most Holy Sacrament one will approach it with greater preparation and reverence. So St. Augustine and St. Ambrose said very well that he who does not deserve to receive every day, does not deserve to receive once a year—*Qui non meretur quotidie accipere, non meretur post annum accipere.*

To meet the question, then, I say in the first place that our not experiencing so much profit from the frequentation of this Most Holy Sacrament comes sometimes from our own fault, in that we do not prepare and dispose ourselves for its reception as we ought, but we approach it by way of custom and ceremonial observance, as though we were to say: "I go to Communion because others go, and such is my custom." We approach, as I say, by way of ceremony, without previous consideration or realization of what we are going to do; that is why we find little profit in it. Therefore when one feels in himself no growth or improvement from the frequentation of this Holy Sacrament, he should look and examine carefully if it be not for want

of preparation; and if he finds it so, he should contrive a remedy.

At other times this is apt to happen in consequence of our falling with advertence into venial sins. There are two sorts of venial sins: the one committed by inadvertence, although with some carelessness and negligence; the other committed with advertence and of set purpose. Venial sins, inasmuch as for want of advertence they befall God-fearing persons who are diligent in His service, do not do this harm; but those that are committed deliberately, on purpose and advisedly, by people slack and remiss in the service of God, do hinder in great measure the divine effects of this Most Holy Sacrament. And the same we may say of faults committed deliberately and of set purpose by a religious in the observance of his rules and institute. As a father will show his son a severe countenance after he has committed some fault, thereby to rebuke and admonish him to be more careful in future, so God is wont to deal with us at Communion and meditation. If, then, we wish to share in the abundant fruits which they enjoy who approach this Divine Sacrament as they ought, we must contrive not to commit such faults deliberately and of set purpose. Let conscientious persons take great note of this, for it is a precaution of great importance if we wish to receive great favors from God.

In the third place, I say that our not experiencing in this Divine Sacrament the effects that we have mentioned, comes often not of any fault of ours; not on that account do we fail to receive great fruit in our souls, though we think we feel none. We are wont to say the same of meditation, in which many are apt to make the same complaint of not experiencing therein the relish and consolation that they could wish and which perchance they were wont to feel in former times; not on that account does their meditation fail to be very profitable. The food given to an invalid, though he has no appetite for it, does not for that fail to



sustain and benefit him. These are things that belong to the high providence of God, He being wont in this way to prove His servants, to exercise and humble them, and draw thence other good things known to Himself. Besides, this Sacrament sometimes works so secretly that man can hardly notice it. The work of grace is commonly like that of nature, little by little, as with a plant, that grows unseen, and then we see that it has grown. So St. Lawrence Justinian says that, as bodily food sustains a man and makes him grow without our noticing it, in like manner this Divine Sacrament comforts and strengthens the soul by an increase of grace, unperceived by us.

In the fourth place, I say that it counts for progress not only to go forward, but also not to fall and go back. The medicine that acts as a preservative against sickness is not less valuable than that which improves health. Let this be well observed, for it is matter of great consolation for those who do not see in themselves any palpable fruit of this Sacrament. We commonly see that those who frequently receive this divine food live in the fear of God, and the whole year goes by with them, and in many cases their whole life, without their committing mortal sin. Now this is one of the chief fruits and effects of this Sacrament, to preserve the communicant from falling into sins, as it is the effect of food to preserve the bodily life. The Council of Trent well observes the same, calling it "a remedy and medicine which rids us of our daily faults and preserves us from mortal sins"—*antidotum, quo liberamur a culpis quotidianis et a peccatis mortalibus praeservamur*. And though a man does not feel in himself that fervor and devotion, nor all that abundant satisfaction and consolation, nor experience after Communion that vigor and alacrity for good works which others are wont to feel, but rather dryness and lukewarmness, not on that account does he fail to receive fruit. And if while he goes to Communion he falls into some faults, if he did not go to Communion he

would fall into others and greater ones. Let us do honestly whatever is on our part to approach with the disposition and reverence that we have said, and without doubt great will be the profit which our soul will receive from the frequentation of this Divine Sacrament.

Tilman Bredenbach tells of a certain duke of Saxony named Wetterkind that, while he was an unbeliever, he was seized with a curiosity to see what went on in the Catholic realms of Charlemagne; and to do this more at his ease, he put on the habit of a pilgrim and went there. It was the time of Holy Week and Easter, when all the world went to Communion. He went about with attention, looking at everything; and amongst other things that he saw was this. When the priest was giving Communion to the people, he saw a very beautiful and shining Infant in every host; and he said that into the mouths of some who received, the Infant went with such alacrity and pleasure and good will, that it seemed that He Himself were going and bestirring Himself to come in; with others He seemed to come in very unwillingly and as it were perforce, turning away His head and hands and kicking with His feet, as though struggling not to enter into their mouths. This miracle led to the conversion to Christianity of this prince and all his people.

Another similar instance, which further illustrates what has gone before, is told of a secular priest at whose Mass a servant of God, who heard it, saw on the paten at the time of Communion, not the species of bread, but an Infant, turning away His face and like one protesting, resisting with hands and feet against being received. The servant of God saw this, not once, but several times. The priest one day in conversation with him went on to say that he did not know how it was, but every time he took the body of the Lord, he took it with extreme difficulty. Then the servant of God recounted to him what he had seen, and advised him to look to himself and amend. The priest took the advice very well, was contrite, and amended his life.

Then the same servant of God, hearing his Mass, saw the Infant as before, but at the time of Communion, with hands and feet joined, entering into the priest's mouth very quickly.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *Of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*

WE have spoken of this Divine Sacrament and its admirable virtues and effects inasmuch as it is a sacrament; it remains now to speak of it as a sacrifice, a thing which the Holy Council of Trent commands preachers and pastors to explain to their flock, that all may understand the great treasure which Christ our Redeemer has left to His Church in giving us this sacrifice, and may know how to profit by it. From the beginning of the world, or at least after sin, even in the natural law, there always were sacrifices, and they were necessary to appease God, to pay Him reverence and honor, and recognize His infinite excellence and majesty. So in the Old Law God instituted priests and many sacrifices; but as the law was imperfect, so the sacrifices also were imperfect. They slew many animals in sacrifice, but that could not bring them to perfection. The priesthood of Aaron and its sacrifices were not enough to sanctify men and release them from their sins. *It was impossible for sins to be taken away by the blood of bulls and goats*, says the Apostle St. Paul (Heb. x. 4). It was needful that there should come another priest of the order of Melchisedech, that is, Jesus Christ, and that He should offer another sacrifice, that is, of Himself, which should be enough to appease God, sanctify men, and raise them to perfection.

St. Augustine says that all the sacrifices of the Old Law signified and were a figure of this sacrifice; and that, as one and the same thing may be signified and conveyed to the

understanding by divers words and in divers tongues, so this one true sacrifice was signified and prefigured long before by all that multitude of sacrifices, partly to commend it to us much and many times over, and partly by diversity and variety to take away the weariness that is caused by many repetitions of the same thing. God commanded that only clean animals should be offered Him in sacrifice, to the end that we might understand that, as those animals which they were to sacrifice should be free from flaws and defects of body and have no stain on them, so He Who was to come to offer Himself in sacrifice for us must have on Him no stain of sin. If those sacrifices were pleasing to God, as it is certain that for the time they were pleasing to Him, it was inasmuch as they were an acknowledgment and profession on the part of men that there was to come a Savior and Redeemer Who was to be the true sacrifice, and in virtue of that acknowledgment those sacrifices had their value for the time. But on the coming of the Savior and Redeemer into the world those sacrifices ceased to be pleasing to God, as the Apostle says: *Entering into the world he says to his eternal Father: Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast prepared for me: holocausts for sin were not pleasing to thee, then said I, Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will, O God* (Psalm xxxix. 8; Heb. x. 5). God gave a body to His only-begotten Son that He might do the will of His Father by offering Himself for us on the Cross. So when He Who was prefigured came into the world, the shadow and figure ceased, and those ancient sacrifices ceased to be pleasing to God.

This, then, is the sacrifice which we have in the New Law, and which every day we offer in the Mass. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is our sacrifice. *He gave himself up for us an oblation and victim to God for an odor of sweetness* (Eph. v. 2). These are no mere devout reflections, but facts taught us by faith. It is true that the Mass



is a memorial and representation of the Passion and death of Christ, and so He said when He instituted this sovereign sacrifice: *Do this in memory of me* (Luke xxii. 19). But we must understand that it is not merely a memorial and representation of that sacrifice in which Christ offered Himself on the Cross to His eternal Father for our sins, but it is the same sacrifice which He then offered, and of the same value and efficacy. And, further, not only is it the same sacrifice, but also He Who offers now this Sacrifice of the Mass is the same Who offered that sacrifice on the Cross.

Thus as then at the time of His Passion Christ Himself was at once priest and sacrifice, so also now in the Mass Christ Himself is not only the sacrifice, but also the priest and pontiff who offers Himself every day in the Mass to the eternal Father by the ministry of His priests. And so the priest who says the Mass represents the person of Christ, and offers this sacrifice as His minister and instrument and in His name. This is well expressed by the words of consecration; for the priest does not say, *This is the body of Christ*, but, *This is My body*, as bearing the person of Christ, Who is the chief priest and pontiff who offers this sacrifice. And for this reason the Prophet David (Psalm cix. 4) and St. Paul (Heb. vii. 17, 21) call Him *a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech*. And He would not well be called a priest forever if He offered sacrifice only once, but He is always offering sacrifice by means of His priests, and never ceases, nor will cease till the end of the world. Such was the priest and such the pontiff that we needed, says the Apostle (Heb. vii. 26; v. 7), one not like other priests, one under no necessity to beg God's pardon first for his own sins, and then for those of his people, but one who should be heard for his dignity, and the reverence due to him—one who should appease God, not with the blood of others, but with his own.

Let us, then, now consider the contrivances of God and the art and wisdom of His counsels that He took for the

salvation of men, and what He did to make this sacrifice in every way acceptable, agreeable, and efficacious. There being four things in a sacrifice—first, to whom it is offered; second, who offers it; third, what it is that is offered; fourth, why it is offered—the wisdom of God ordered this sacrifice in such manner and with such art that He Who offers this sacrifice, to reconcile us with God, is one with Him to Whom it is offered, and has made Himself one with those for whom it is offered, and Himself is that which is offered, as St. Augustine explains. So it came to be of such value and efficacy as to suffice to satisfy and appease God, not only for our sins, but for those of the whole world, and of a hundred thousand worlds, if such there were. *He is the victim of propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world*, says the Apostle and Evangelist St. John (I John ii. 2). And so theologians and saints say that this sacrifice is not only sufficient satisfaction and atonement for our debts and sins, but an altogether superabundant atonement; for that which is given and offered here is much more than the debt that we had contracted; and this sacrifice is much more agreeable to the eternal Father than the offense committed had been offensive. Hence also, though the priest be a wicked man and a sinner, not on that account does this sacrifice cease to profit and avail those for whom it is offered, nor is aught of its value and efficacy diminished; for Christ is not only the sacrifice, but also the priest and pontiff who offers it; as the alms that you give loses nothing of its virtue and merit, though you send it by the hands of a servant who is a wicked and sinful man.

The Council of Trent says (Sess. 22): "It is one and the same victim, and the same offerer, now offering by the ministry of priests, Who then offered Himself on the Cross; only the manner of offering is different." The difference is, as the council goes on to explain, that what was offered on the Cross was a sacrifice in *blood*, by the shedding of

blood, because Christ was then passible and mortal; but the Sacrifice of the Mass is an *unbloody sacrifice*, without the shedding of blood, because *Christ rising from the dead dieth now no more: death shall no more have dominion over him* (Rom. vi. 9).

The council goes on to say, as say also the evangelists, that Christ the Redeemer of the world, coming to be sacrificed and die on the Cross to redeem us, would not have His sacrifice end there, being as He was *a priest forever* (Heb. v. 5, 10), but would have His Church possess it, and the sacrifice to be permanent. And inasmuch as He was *a priest according to the order of Melchisedech*, who offered a sacrifice of bread and wine, it was proper that this sacrifice should remain to us under the species of bread and wine; and so at the Last Supper, the night in which He was to be traitorously given over, He took bread and gave thanks, divided it and gave it to His disciples (Matt. xxvi. 26; Mark xiv. 22; Luke xxii. 19; I Cor. xi. 23). In the very hour when men were contriving to put Him to death, He was contriving to give them life. He wished to leave to His spouse, the visible Church, a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of men required—a sacrifice which should not only represent and bring to memory the sacrifice offered in blood on the Cross, but should have the same virtue and efficacy as that had to forgive sins and appease God and reconcile us to Him, and which should be in fact the same sacrifice. So He consecrated His most holy body and blood under the appearances of bread and wine, converting the bread into His body and the wine into His blood, and under those appearances He offered Himself to the eternal Father. This the doctors say was the first Mass celebrated in the world. At the same time He ordained His disciples priests of the New Testament, and bade them and their successors in the priesthood to offer this sacrifice, saying: *This do ye in memory of me* (Luke xxii. 19).

For this reason some say that the Feast of the Most Holy

Sacrament is the greatest of all the feasts of Christ our Redeemer that the Church celebrates; because the others are only a memory and representation, as the Incarnation, Nativity, Resurrection, and Ascension. The Son of God does not then become man, or be born, or rise again, or ascend into heaven; but this feast is not only a memory and representation, but Christ comes anew and is under the sacramental species every time the priest says the words of consecration; and every day there is offered in the Mass the same sacrifice that was offered when Christ our Redeemer died for us upon the Cross.

Let us here consider the great love of Christ for men, and the great debt that we owe Him, in that, not content with offering Himself once on the Cross for our sins, He would remain here in sacrifice, that we might have not once only, but many times, and every day till the end of the world, a well-pleasing sacrifice to offer to the eternal Father—a present so great and precious to present to Him to appease Him for our sins—a gift so precious and well-pleasing that greater there could not be. What would have become of the Christian people if we had not this sacrifice wherewith to appease God? We should have been like another Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaias i. 9); God would have leveled us to the ground and destroyed us, as our sins deserved. This, says St. Thomas, is the proper effect of sacrifice, to appease God thereby, according to the words of St. Paul: *He offered himself for us to God as an oblation and victim unto an odor of sweetness* (Eph. v. 2). As when on earth a man is appeased and pardons an injury done him in consideration of some offering or present that they make him, so this sacrifice and present that we make is so acceptable and agreeable to God as to be enough to appease Him, and warrant us to appear in His presence, and make Him regard us with loving eyes.

If on Good Friday, when the Redeemer of the world was crucified, you had found your way to the foot of the



Cross, and some drops of His Precious Blood had fallen upon you, what consolation your soul would have felt! What strength you would have gathered! What hope so certain of your salvation you would have conceived! The thief, who all his life long had known no other trade but stealing, conceived such a great hope that of robber he turned saint, and of the cross he made paradise. Now the same Son of God, Who then offered Himself on the Cross, the same offers Himself now in the Mass for you, and this sacrifice is of the same value and efficacy as that; and so the Church says: "Every time this commemorative sacrifice is celebrated, the work of our redemption is enacted." The great fruits of that sacrifice offered in blood are poured out and communicated to us by this bloodless offering.

So high and sovereign is this sacrifice that it can be offered to God alone. And the Council of Trent observes that, though the Church is accustomed to say Mass in reverence and memory of the saints, yet this Sacrifice of the Mass is not offered to the saints. And so the Church does not say, "I offer to thee, St. Peter, or St. Paul," but it is offered to God alone, giving Him thanks for the victories and crowns which He has granted to His saints, and imploring their patronage, that they may intercede for us in heaven, since we honor and reverence them on earth.

Thus this divine mystery is not only a sacrament, like the other sacraments, but is at the same time a sacrifice. There is a great difference between these two concepts of sacrament and sacrifice. Its being a sacrifice consists in its being offered by means of the priest in the Mass. It is the received opinion of theologians that the essence of this sacrifice consists in the consecration of both species, and that it is then offered when the consecration is complete. As that sacrifice in blood was complete in the instant in which He offered Himself to the eternal Father for us on the Cross, so in the Mass, which is a true representation of that sacrifice and is identical with it, the sacrifice is essentially

completed and offered in the instant in which the priest has done saying the words of consecration over the bread and over the wine. There and then, by force and virtue of those words, the body is in the host and the blood in the chalice. This consecration of the blood, which is done after the consecration of the body, represents to the life the shedding of the blood of Christ, and consequently the separation of His soul from His body, which ensued upon the shedding and separation of the blood from the body. Thus by the words of consecration there is effected the sacrifice that is offered, and by those same words the offering is done. But its being a sacrament is something permanent, after the consecration, so long as the species last, when it is kept in the tabernacle, when it is taken to the sick, when it is given in Communion, and it has not then the essence and virtue of a sacrifice.

There is another difference, that, as it is a sacrament, it profits the recipient like the other sacraments, giving grace and producing its proper effects; but as it is a sacrifice, it profits not only him who receives it, but also others for whom it is offered. So the Council of Trent observes that it was for these two objects and these two reasons that Christ instituted this Divine Mystery; the one that, as a sacrament, it might be sustenance to the soul, enabling her to preserve, restore, and renew her spiritual life; the other that the Church might have a perpetual sacrifice to offer to God for pardon and expiation of our sins, for a remedy in our needs, for a return and a thanksgiving for benefits received, and to win and obtain new graces and favors of the Lord. And it is not only a remedy and relief for the living, but also for the dead who die in grace and are in purgatory; all benefit by this sacrifice.

It is also a very consoling fact that the priest, when he says Mass, offers the sacrifice for himself and others, and at the same time all who are there hearing it offer along with him this sacrifice for themselves and others. As when

a township makes a present to its lord, there come three or four men, and one alone speaks to him, but all bring the present and all offer it; so here the priest alone speaks and with his hands offers this sacrifice, but all offer it by the hands of the priest. It is true that there is a difference, inasmuch as in the example given, though they choose one spokesman, yet any one of them might have discharged that function; whereas it is not so in the Mass, for the priest alone, who is chosen by God for that purpose, can consecrate and do what is done in the Mass, but all the rest, who serve or assist at it, likewise offer this sacrifice. And so the priest himself says in the Mass: "Pray, brethren, to God that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable and agreeable to Almighty God." And in the canon he says, *pro quibus tibi offerimus vel qui tibi offerunt*—"for whom we offer to Thee, or who themselves offer." This should inspire much solicitude in all to hear or help at Mass, on which point we will enlarge in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER XV

### *How to Hear Mass*

WHAT we have said seems to oblige us to speak on the subject how to hear Mass, and what to do during it. On this we will say three things, which will be three devotions that we may practise at Mass, each of them much to the point, and all three may be practised together. And they shall not be out of our own head, but of our Mother the Church, that they may be regarded and valued as in reason they should be. For the first we must presuppose that the Mass is a memorial of the Passion and death of Christ, as has been said. The Redeemer of the world wished this holy sacrifice to be a memorial of His Passion and of the love that He bore us. He meant us to remember what He had suffered for us, and that this continued remem-

brance should greatly rouse us to love and serve Him, that we should not be like that people who *forgot the God who saved them* (Psalm cv. 21). Thus one of the excellent devotions that we may practise at Mass is to consider the mysteries of the Passion there represented, eliciting therefrom acts of love and purposes to serve the Lord loyally.

For this it will be a great help to know the significations of what is said and done at Mass, to lead us to understand and appreciate better and better the great mysteries there represented; because there is no word or sign or ceremony that is not fraught with great meanings and mysteries; and all the vestments and ornaments that the priest puts on to say Mass also represent to us the same. The amice, the saints say, represents the veil wherewith they covered the face of Christ our Redeemer when they said to Him, striking Him on the face, *Prophecy who hath struck thee* (Mark xiv. 65; Matt. xxvi. 68). The alb is the white garment in which Herod clothed Him in mockery, and scorned Him along with his army, and sent Him back to Pilate (Luke xxiii. 11). The girdle represents either the first cords with which He was bound when they seized Him, or the scourges wherewith He was scourged by order of Pilate. The maniple represents the second cords wherewith they bound Christ's hands to the pillar when they scourged Him. It is put on the left arm, because that is nearer the heart, to denote the great love wherewith He received those cruel scourges for our sins, and the love wherewith it is reasonable that we should correspond to so great love and bounty. The stole represents the third binding of Him, which was the rope they cast round His neck when He carried the Cross on His shoulders to be crucified. The chasuble represents the purple robe wherewith they clothed Him in mockery (Matt. xxvii. 28); or, according to others, the seamless tunic of which they stripped Him to crucify Him (John xix. 27).

The coming of the priest into the sacristy to put on the



priestly vestments represents the entry of Christ into this world, in the sacred shrine of the virginal womb of the Virgin Mary, His Mother, where He vested Himself in the vestures of our humanity to go and celebrate the sacrifice of the Cross. At the going out of the priest from the sacristy the choir sings the introit of the Mass, which signifies the ardent desires and sighs with which the holy Fathers looked forward to the Incarnation of the Son of God. *Oh, that thou wouldst break through the heavens and descend!* (Isaias lxiv. 1). The introit is repeated a second time, to signify the iteration of these cries and desires which those holy Fathers put forth to see Christ in the world clad in our flesh. The priest saying the Confiteor as a penitent man signifies that Christ took upon Himself all our sins to atone for them, and was willing to appear a sinner and be accounted for such, as the Prophet Isaias says (Isaias liii. 4, 11), that we might be justified and sanctified. The Kyries, which mean "Lord, have mercy," signify the great misery in which we all were before the coming of Christ. It would be a long business to run through all the mysteries in particular. Suffice it to understand that there is nothing in the Mass that is not full of mysteries. All those signs and crosses that the priest makes over the host and the chalice are to represent to us and bring into our memory the many various torments and pains that Christ suffered for us on the Cross. The elevation of host and chalice after the consecration, besides the fact of its being done for the people to adore, represents how they raised the Cross on high that all might see Him crucified. Each may occupy himself in the consideration of one mystery or two, as devotion shall lead him, gathering fruit therefrom and seeking to correspond to so great love and bounty. This will be more profitable than hurriedly running the memory over many mysteries. This is the first devotion that we may practise at Mass.

The second devotion and method of hearing Mass is a

capital method and one very proper to the purpose; we outlined it in the previous chapter. For the understanding thereof we must presuppose two things which we there laid down. The first is that the Mass is not only a memorial and representation of the Passion of Christ, and of that sacrifice which He offered on the Cross to the eternal Father for our sins, but is the same sacrifice which was then offered and of the same value and efficacy. The second is that, though the priest alone speaks and with his hands offers this sacrifice, yet all the bystanders also offer it along with him. This being supposed, I say that the best way of hearing Mass is to go along with the priest, offering this sacrifice and doing so far as we can what he does, reckoning that we all unite there, not only in hearing Mass, but in offering that sacrifice along with the priest, since in sober reality that is the fact. To this end it is enjoined that priests should say in a clear and moderately loud voice those parts of the Mass which it is proper for the people to hear, that so they may enter into it and prepare themselves along with the priest to offer this sacrifice with that preparation which the Church has ordained for this purpose so wisely and so advisedly. For all that is here said and done is meant to prepare and dispose both priest and assistants to offer this high sacrifice with the utmost devotion and reverence.

That we may better be able to carry this out, it is well to notice that the Mass has three principal parts. The first is from the Confiteor to the offertory, which is all to prepare the people to offer this sacrifice worthily. This is done at the beginning by the Confiteor and by some verses of the psalms even before the going up to the altar. Then comes the Kyrie, which besides signifying, as we have said, the great misery in which we were before the coming of Christ, gives us also to understand that he who has to treat with God cannot treat with Him on grounds of justice, but only of mercy. Then there follows the *Gloria in excel-*

*sis Deo*, giving glory to God for the Incarnation, and acknowledging the greatness of that benefit. Then follows the collect. And it is to be observed that the priest says *Oremus*, and not *Oro*, that all may pray with him, and he in the person of all. And that this may be done with more spirit, a petition goes before praying for the assistance of the Holy Ghost for that purpose, by the priest turning to the people with *Dominus vobiscum*, and the people answering, *Et cum spiritu tuo*. The epistle signifies the doctrine of the Old Testament and the teaching of St. John Baptist, which preceded the doctrine of the Gospel as a sort of catechetical preparation. The gradual, which is said after the epistle, signifies the penance that the people did at the preaching of John the Baptist. The Alleluia, which follows after the gradual, signifies the joy of the soul after having obtained pardon of her sins by means of penance. The Gospel signifies the doctrine which Christ preached in the world. The priest makes the sign of the cross on the book which he has to read, because he has to preach to us Christ crucified; and then he makes the sign of the cross on his forehead, mouth, and breast, as do the people also, whereby we profess that we hold to Christ crucified in our hearts and will confess Him with our tongues and with our uncovered faces, and that we will live and die in this confession. Fresh lights are lit for the reading of the Gospel, since this is the doctrine that enlightens our souls, and the light that the Son of God brought into the world. The Gospel is heard standing, to let us see the readiness which we should have to obey it, and to defend it when necessary. It is heard with head uncovered, to give us to understand the reverence which we should have for the word of God. Thereupon follows the creed, which is the fruit gathered from the doctrine of the Gospel, for in it we confess the articles and principal mysteries of our faith. This is the first part of the Mass, which they call the Mass of the Catechumens, because up to this point the catechumens,

who were not baptized, were allowed to be present at the Mass, as also unbelievers, whether Jews or Gentiles, that they might hear the word of God and be instructed therein.

The second part of the Mass is from the offertory to the Pater Noster, which is called the Mass of Sacrifice, at which only Christians can be present. And so it was the custom for the deacon to give notice from the pulpit for the catechumens to go; and then he said to them in olden times, *Ite, missa est*—"Go, because this is the Mass;" the sacrifice is now beginning, at which it is not lawful for you to assist. This is the principal part of the Mass, in which is done the consecration and the offering of the Consecrated. So the priest begins to keep silence, and say the prayers in secret, not to be heard by the bystanders, since now the sacrifice is approaching. So at the approach of His Passion the holy Gospel says that Christ our Redeemer retired to the desert, to the town of Ephrem, and no longer walked in public (John xi. 54). As now the priest is coming near to the offering of the sacrifice, he washes his hands, to give us to understand the cleanness and purity with which we should draw nigh to this sacrifice. And turning to the people he tells them to pray along with him that this sacrifice may be acceptable and agreeable to the majesty of God. Then after a short prayer in secret he once more breaks silence with the preface, which is a special warning whereby the priest disposes himself and the people for this sacrifice, exhorting them to lift up their hearts to heaven and return thanks to the Lord for having come down from heaven to take our flesh and die for us. *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest*, which are the praises with which they received Him in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Matt. xxi. 9). *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts*, are the cries with which the courtiers of heaven utter their perpetual praise, as says Isaias (vi. 3), and St. John in the Apocalypse (iv. 8). Then begins the canon of the Mass, wherein the priest



begs the eternal Father, through the merits of Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, to accept this sacrifice for the Church, for the pope, for the bishop, for the king. Then in secret he prays God for particular persons, offering also the sacrifice for them, making the first Memento, which we call the Memento of the Living; and he particularly offers this sacrifice for all the persons present at it. Thus it is a very profitable thing to assist at Mass, since those who assist at it come in for a greater share of the gifts of God, even as they who are in waiting at the table of the king, and they who come out to receive him when he makes his entry into the city; and as they who were at the foot of the Cross, St. John and Our Lady, Magdalen and the Good Thief. Rupert says that to be present at Mass is being present at the obsequies of Christ our Redeemer. Then follows the consecration, in which, as we said in the last chapter, the sacrifice of the Mass consists and is offered for all those of whom mention has been made in the Memento.

I say, then, that the best devotion that one can have at Mass is to continue attending to what the priest says and does, and to continue offering along with him this sacrifice, and doing, so far as possible, what he does, as one who has a part in the great transaction that is there carried on and celebrated. And when the priest makes the Memento for the Living, it is good for everyone present to make also his Memento, asking God on behalf of the living, and afterwards of the dead, even as the priest does.

Our Father Francis Borgia made his Memento in this way. Presupposing the consideration already mentioned, that this sacrifice represents and is the same with that which was offered for us on the Cross, he made his Memento by the five wounds of Christ. In the wound of the right hand he commended to God the pope and the cardinals, all bishops and prelates, clerics and parish priests, and all the ecclesiastical state. In the wound of the left hand he

commended to God the king and all the justices, and chief officers of the secular arm. In the wound of the right foot, all religious orders, and particularly the Society. In the wound of the left foot, all his kinsmen, relations, friends, and benefactors, and all who had recommended themselves to him in his prayers. The wound in the side he reserved for himself, and there he entered and took refuge, as *in the hole in the rock, in the hollow in the wall* (Cant. ii. 14), begging God's pardon for his sins and remedy for his necessities and miseries. So he offered this sacrifice for all these ends, and for each of them as if he were offering it for that alone, offering it always particularly for that person or persons for whom he said the Mass of obligation or devotion, with a will that there should be applied to him all that part of that sacrifice that was due to him, without his being the loser in any way by the other intentions for which he offered it. He did the like in the Memento for the Dead, offering that sacrifice in the first place for the person or persons for whom in particular he was saying that Mass; secondly, for the souls of his parents and relations, thirdly, for the deceased members of his order; fourthly, for his friends, benefactors, and persons recommended to him, and for all to whom he was under any obligation; fifthly, for the souls that were most forsaken, who had none to pray for them, and such as were undergoing more grievous pains and were in greater need, and for those who were nearest to going out of purgatory, and for all for whom it would be greater charity and service of God to offer it. We may follow this plan, or any other, as each shall find it best.

And particularly we should offer this sacrifice for three things, which among many others oblige and bind us in every way: first, in thanksgiving for the great benefits that we have received at the hand of God, as well general as particular; secondly, in satisfaction and atonement for our sins; thirdly, to beg a remedy for our necessities and weaknesses, and gain new favors from the Lord. And it is

very well for each one to offer this sacrifice to God for these three ends, not for himself alone, but also for his neighbors; offering it not only for the benefits that he has received, but also for the so great favors that God has done, and does every day, to all mankind. And not only in satisfaction and atonement for his own sins, but also for all the sins of the world, since this is enough and more than enough to satisfy and appease the eternal Father for them all. And not only to beg a remedy for private and particular miseries and necessities, but for all those of the Church. And hereby one better falls in with the priest, who does so; besides, charity and zeal for souls require that an individual should not look to his own particular account only, but to the common good of the Church. And, speaking generally, it is well to offer this sacrifice for all the intentions for which Christ offered Himself upon the Cross, and for all for which He wished it to be offered when He instituted it. And it will be well for us to offer ourselves also along with Christ in sacrifice to the eternal Father every day in the Mass for these intentions, leaving nothing in us that we do not offer. For though it is true that our works of themselves are worth very little, yet, taken with the blood of Christ and in union with His merits and Passion, they will be of great value and very pleasing in God's eyes.

St. Chrysostom says that the hour in which this divine sacrifice is offered is the most opportune time there is for dealing with God, and that the angels hold it for a most happy occasion to ask for favors on behalf of the human race; and that they cry to God then with great earnestness on our behalf at so favorable a moment. He further says that there are there heavenly squadrons of cherubim and seraphim, kneeling with great reverence before the majesty of God; and that forthwith upon the offering of this sacrifice these heavenly messengers fly with mandates for the opening of the prisons of purgatory and the execution of what has been there at Mass arranged. Thus

there is reason for us to value this opportunity and profit by so good an occasion, and go to Mass to offer that divine sacrifice with great confidence that by means thereof we shall appease the anger of the eternal Father and pay the debts of our sins, and gain the gifts and favors that we ask for.

The third devotion appertains particularly to the third part of the Mass, which is from the Pater Noster to the end. This part contains the priest's Communion and the prayers that are said after Communion, all of which are a thanksgiving for the benefit received. What the hearers of Mass have to do then at that time is there also to accompany the priest as far as they can. We cannot communicate sacramentally at every Mass, but we can spiritually. This, then, is the third devotion for Mass, a very good and profitable devotion, that, when the priest communicates sacramentally, those who are present should also communicate spiritually. Spiritual Communion is the forming of a great desire of receiving this Most Holy Sacrament, according to those words of Job: *Who will give us of his flesh, that we may be filled?* (Job xxxi. 31). As a glutton feasts his eyes on a delicate morsel, so the servant of God should set his eyes and his heart on this divine food; and when the priest opens his mouth to receive it, he too should open the mouth of his soul with great desire to receive the same and enjoy the relish thereof. In this way God will satisfy his heart's desire by an increase of grace and charity, as He promises by the prophet: *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it* (Psalm lxxx. 11). But the Council of Trent here observes that for this desire of the Most Holy Sacrament to be a spiritual Communion, it must spring from a lively faith informed with charity; that is to say, it is necessary that he who forms this desire should be in charity and the grace of God, for then he reaches the attainment of this spiritual fruit, increasing his union with Christ. But such a desire, in a person in mortal sin, would not be a



spiritual Communion; rather, if he were to desire to communicate, remaining the while in mortal sin, he would sin mortally. And if his desire supposed his first getting out of his sin, though it would be a good desire, it would not be a spiritual Communion, because, as he is not in grace, he cannot receive the fruit thereof. Thus he must be in the grace of God; and then to have that desire is to communicate spiritually, since by this desire of receiving that Most Holy Sacrament he partakes of all the good gifts and spiritual graces that they are apt to partake of who receive sacramentally.

It may even be that one who communicates spiritually receives more grace than another who communicates sacramentally, though that Communion be made in the state of grace. For though it is true that sacramental Communion of itself is more profitable and gives more grace than spiritual Communion by the fact of its being a sacrament and fraught with the sacramental privilege of conferring grace *ex opere operato*, which spiritual Communion does not do, yet so great may be the reverence and humility of some particular person, in his desire to receive this Most Holy Sacrament, that he will receive thereby greater grace than another who receives sacramentally, but not so well disposed.

Furthermore, there is another thing about spiritual Communion, that, being secret and not seen by others, it is not attended with any danger of vainglory in the eyes of bystanders, as is the case with sacramental Communion, which is public. And it has another privilege besides which sacramental Communion has not, that it can be made more frequently. For sacramental Communion is made once in the week, or at most, once a day; but spiritual Communion may be made not only every day, but many times a day. So there are many who have the laudable custom of communicating spiritually, not only when they hear Mass, but

every time they visit the Most Holy Sacrament, and at other times.

There is a good method of spiritual Communion which some servants of God practise; we will set it down here, that anyone may profit of it who will. When you hear Mass or visit the Most Holy Sacrament, or at any time whenever you wish to communicate spiritually, rouse your heart to affections and desires to receive this Most Holy Sacrament, and say: "O Lord, who shall have the cleanness and purity requisite to receive worthily so great a Guest! Oh, who shall be worthy to receive Thee daily and keep Thee ever in his breast! O Lord, how rich I should be, could I deserve to receive Thee and take Thee home to my house! How happy would be my lot! But it is not necessary, O Lord, for Thee to come to me sacramentally to enrich me; only will it, my God, and that will be enough; command it, O Lord, and I shall be justified." And in testimony thereof say those words (Matt. viii. 8) which the Church uses: "My Lord Jesus Christ, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter into my dwelling; but do Thou speak, for at Thy mere word my soul shall be whole and saved. If looking upon the brazen serpent (Num. xxi. 9) was enough to cure the wounded, it must also be enough to look at Thee with lively faith and ardent desire to receive Thee." And it would be well to conclude with the antiphon, "O Sacred Banquet," and the versicle *Panem de coelo*, with the collect of the Most Holy Sacrament.

## CHAPTER XVI

*Some Examples on the Devotion of Hearing Mass, and  
Saying It Every Day, and the Reverence That We  
Should Have in Assisting at It*

POPE PIUS II and Sabelicus relate that in the Province of Istria, which marches with Pannonia and Austria, there lived a devout knight who was harassed by a grave

temptation to hang himself, and sometimes was on the point of doing so. Living under this temptation, he disclosed it to a learned and God-fearing religious, to ask his advice. The religious comforted and consoled him greatly, and then told him to keep in his retinue a chaplain who should say Mass daily. He thought this a good plan, and made an agreement with a priest accordingly. The two of them went to live in a good castle which he had in the country. There for a twelvemonth he lived undisturbed, thanks to this most holy devotion. It happened one day that his chaplain asked his leave to go and keep a feast in a neighboring town with a clerical friend of his. The knight gave leave, intending to go there and hear Mass and be present at the feast. But something came in the way to detain him, so that it was midday when he managed to get out of his castle, much annoyed at the thought of missing Mass and already troubled with his old temptation. On his way in this distress he met with a peasant coming from that place, who assured him that divine service there was already over. At that the knight was so much afflicted that he began to curse his luck, and said that now, not having heard Mass that day, he gave himself up for a lost man. The peasant told him not to trouble himself, for he would sell him the Mass and all that he had merited before God by it. The knight agreed, and so a bargain was struck that he should give him the cloak that he was wearing. He gave it to him with hearty good will, and thereupon they parted. However, the knight thought fit to go to the town and make his prayer in the church. He did so, and afterwards returning to his house, when he reached the spot, the scene of that simoniacal transaction, he saw that the peasant had hung himself on a tree, God so permitting in punishment for his sin. He was much amazed, and gave thanks to the Lord for having delivered him; and henceforth, though he lived many years afterwards, he was no more troubled with that temptation.

In the chronicles of St. Francis we read of Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal and niece of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, that among other great virtues that she had, one was her tender compassion for the poor and the sick and her readiness to help them. It is said of her that no poor person ever asked her for alms whom she did not relieve, and, besides, she laid an injunction on her almoner to refuse alms to none. Now this holy queen had a page or valet, whom she employed in the distribution of her alms and her works of charity, as he was a virtuous boy and well-mannered. It happened that there was another page, a valet of the king, Don Dionysius, her husband, and in high favor with him. This page, seeing the favor in which the other stood with the queen, for envy of him and to curry favor with his master, tried to set him in an ill light by saying that the queen had an improper affection for him. And as the king was not leading a very good life, he was moved by the devil to feel at heart some uneasiness, and there stole over him a certain distrust of the queen, his wife. Wherefore, shocked at what his page had told him—though it is true that he did not altogether believe it, but was in a state of doubt—he made up his mind in any case to have that other page secretly put to death. That day he went out to take horse-exercise, and passed by a place where there was a limekiln, which was alight burning lime. He called apart the men who were stoking the fire, and gave them charge about a valet of his, whom he would send them with a message, asking whether they had done what the king had commanded; they were to seize him at once and cast him into the furnace, so that he should die outright there, that being a point appertaining to his highness' service. When, then, the next morning came, the king directed the queen's page to go with this message to the furnace aforesaid. But our Lord, Who never fails His servants and stands forth in defense of those who are innocent and blameless, ordained that this youth should pass



by a church, where they were ringing the elevation bell for a Mass that was then being said. He went in, and heard that Mass to the end, and two others that then began one after another. The king meanwhile, anxious to know if he was already dead, happening to see the other page of the bedchamber, the one who had brought the accusation and given the false witness before the king, sent him in all haste to the furnace, to know if what he had commanded had been done. When he arrived with the message, being by all tokens the man whom the king had spoken to them about, the furnace men seized him at once, bound him, and cast him in alive. Meanwhile the other page, the innocent and faultless one, had finished hearing his Masses, and came to give the king's message to those who were stoking the furnace, asking if they had fulfilled my lord's commands, and they answered, Yes. With that answer he went back to the king. When the king saw him, he was almost beside himself, seeing and considering how this affair had turned out, quite the other way to what he had arranged and ordered. Turning to the page, he began to scold him, asking him where he had loitered such a long time. Then the servant gave him an account of himself and answered: "Sir, as I was going to carry out your highness' command, I happened to pass close by a church, where they were ringing the elevation bell; I went in and heard that Mass to the end; and before it was finished, they began another and another Mass, and so I waited until they were all done, for my father gave me as his last blessing before he died an injunction, that all the Masses that I saw begin, I should hear unto the end." Then the king by this judgment of God came to open his eyes to the truth, to the innocence of the queen, and the fidelity and virtue of the good servant, and so cast away the evil imagination that he was entertaining against her.

In the "Manual of Examples" it is related that there lived in a town two tradesmen of the same trade. One of them

had a wife, sons, and family, and nevertheless was so devout as to hear Mass every day, and would on no account miss it; and so our Lord helped him, and his business went well, and his stock increased. The other on the contrary, though he had no child, nor servant, but only his wife, and was always at work day and night, even on feast days, and seldom heard Mass, yet never could get out of his wretched condition, but lived in great need and poverty. Seeing, then, how well the other was getting on, he one day put himself in his way, and asked him from what source so many good things came in to him, and he made such profits. "Why," he said, "though you have such a family of children and a wife, the necessities of life are never wanting to you. Your needs are always sufficiently supplied; and here I am alone with my wife, working harder than you do, and yet I live in never-ending need and poverty." The other, who had the devout habit of hearing daily Mass, said in reply that he would show him tomorrow the place where he found this gain. Morning came, and he went to the other's house and took him with him to church; and, after hearing Mass, told him to go back to his house and work. He did the same the next day, and said to him the same words. But on the third day, when he came to his house to take him with him to church, the other said to him: "Friend, if I wanted to go to church, there would be no need for you to come and take me there. I know the road well; what I wanted to know was, where is the place where you found such a vantage-ground for growing rich, and I wanted you to take me there where I too could enrich myself." He answered him, saying: "I do not know nor have I any other place where to look for treasure of the body and the reward of life everlasting but in the church." And in confirmation he added: "Have you not heard what the Lord says in the Gospel: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all other things shall be thrown in to you* (Matt. vi. 33)?" The good man, hearing this, under-

stood the mystery, and was contrite for his sin, amended his life, and became thenceforth very devout, and heard his Mass every day from that day forth, and also began to get well and prosper and succeed in all his affairs.

St. Antoninus of Florence relates that of two young friends, who went out from town one feast day to go and enjoy themselves in the country at a certain hunting-party, one of them had taken care to hear Mass and fulfil the Church's precept, and the other had not. As they went on together on their way, the weather set in to change and the heavens to lower. It looked as though the sky were going to fall and drown the world with the great claps of thunder that began, and the frequent flashes of lightning which came in rapid succession with portentously heavy rain. Between the flashes there was heard in the air a voice, and these youths themselves heard it, saying: "Give it him, strike him!" They stood aghast, but as the weather cleared up they went on their way; and when they were not expecting it, there let a flash, and killed the unhappy youth who had not that day heard Mass. Great was the terror and bewilderment that it caused in the other; he was out of his wits, and did not know what to do with himself. Finally, mainly because he was now near the place of meeting where the hunt was to come off, he went on and continued his journey, when he heard another voice that said: "Strike him, strike this one!" The poor fellow was much terrified at this voice, remembering what had happened to his companion; but he heard another voice in the air, which said: "I cannot, since today he has heard the *Et Verbum caro factum est*," meaning thereby that he had heard Mass, because at the end of it there is usually said the Gospel of St. John, where these words occur. And so that youth escaped that terrible and sudden death.

We read of St. Bonaventure that, considering the sovereign majesty of God, Who is in this Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, and his very lowly condition, and fear-

ing to fail to receive the Lord with due dispositions, he went many days without approaching the altar; and one day, hearing Mass, at the time when the priest broke the host, one part of it came to him and put itself in his mouth. Returning thanks to the Lord for this incomparable favor, he understood that it was meant to teach him that God is more pleased with those who lovingly and with heartfelt affection approach and receive Him, than with those who for fear stand aloof and omit to receive Him; as afterwards the saint himself put in writing. And St. Thomas wrote the same.

It is related of the holy Friar Ferdinand de Talavera, first Archbishop of Granada, that, when he was at court, occupied in many grave affairs of state, his many enemies not finding anything else they could accuse him of, some of them complained that he said Mass every day; they wondered how, with so many arduous charges upon him, he could be so well prepared, in such repose and peace of mind, as to celebrate every day as though he were in his monastery. When the Cardinal of Spain, the Archbishop of Toledo, Don Pedro Gonsalez de Mendoza, one day in familiar conversation told him what was said, the servant of God answered: "This is how it is, my lord. Since their highnesses have laid such heavy responsibilities on me, giving me a charge that is wholly beyond my strength, I have no other resource, not to fall down to the ground under my burden, but to betake myself every day to the Holy Sacrament, that so I may be able to have strength to carry on to the end, and give a good account of what their highnesses have entrusted me with."

Surius relates of St. Peter Celestine, who was afterwards pope, that, setting himself one day to consider on the one hand the great majesty of the Lord, Who is present in this Most Holy Sacrament, and on the other his own meanness and unworthiness, and calling to mind St. Paul the first hermit, St. Anthony, St. Francis, and other saints, who had



never dared to exercise this holy ministry of Mass and daily Communion, he fell into great doubt and perplexity concerning the frequentation of it, and abstained for some days in fear, trembling, and reverence for so great a Lord. He made up his mind to go to Rome to consult the pope on the question, whether it would be better to abstain from celebrating altogether or for some time. On his traveling for this purpose, there appeared to him on the road a holy abbot, already dead, the one who had given him the habit, and said to him: "Who, son, angel though he be, is worthy of this ministry? Nevertheless, I advise thee frequently to celebrate with fear and reverence;" and forthwith he disappeared.

St. Gregory relates that a little before his time it happened that a man was taken and carried off captive by the enemy to far distant lands, where he was for a long time imprisoned without anyone's knowing or having news of him. After the lapse of so long a time, his wife believed him dead, and as such had Masses and sacrifices offered every week for his soul. And it pleased the Lord that, every time the Masses were said for him, the poor captive found himself free from his bonds. Not long after that, it came about that the man came out from his captivity and returned home free. He told his wife among other things this marvelous fact, which filled him with astonishment and wonder, that on certain days and at certain hours every week his chains fell off him, as has been said. His wife found by computation that it was just on these days and at these hours that she had had the sacrifice offered and Masses said for him. St. Gregory adds: "Hence, brethren, we may learn the efficacy of this sacrifice offered for us to loosen the bonds and fetters of the soul." Venerable Bede narrates a similar story.

St. Chrysostom says that at the time the priest celebrates the angels there assist, and that at the hour of the offering the altar is surrounded with angels. And he says that he

had heard it related by a trustworthy person that an old man, a great servant of God, had seen suddenly descend from heaven a great multitude of angels, and that the altar was surrounded by them, vested in such bright robes that the sight dazzled his eyes, bowing down like soldiers before their king. "So I can well believe," says this glorious saint, "since where the King is, there the courtiers are." And St. Gregory says: "Who doubts but that, in the hour in which this holy sacrifice is offered, at the voice of the priest the heavens are opened, and the courtiers of heaven come down along with Christ, and the whole place is encompassed with choirs of angels, like good courtiers in attendance on their king?" And thus many saints explain that passage of St. Paul, where he commands women to have their heads covered in church, giving as his reason, *propter angelos*—"for the sake of the angels" (I Cor. xi. 10).

St. Nilus writes of the same St. John Chrysostom, who was his master, that, when he went into the church, he saw a great multitude of angels, clothed in white, with bare feet, bending their bodies with great reverence, in complete silence, and as it were quite overawed at the presence of Christ our God and Lord in this Sacrament. In accordance with this, the glorious Chrysostom says: "When you are before this Divine Sacrament, you must not think that you are in company with men on earth. Do you not feel the near presence of those heavenly troops of cherubim and seraphim, who stand before that great Lord of heaven and earth? Be ye, brethren, in the church in great silence, with fear and trembling. See how a king's courtiers stand in his presence, how modest and grave and respectful they are. No one there dares utter a word, or roll his eyes one way or another; learn from thence the way in which you ought to appear before God."









